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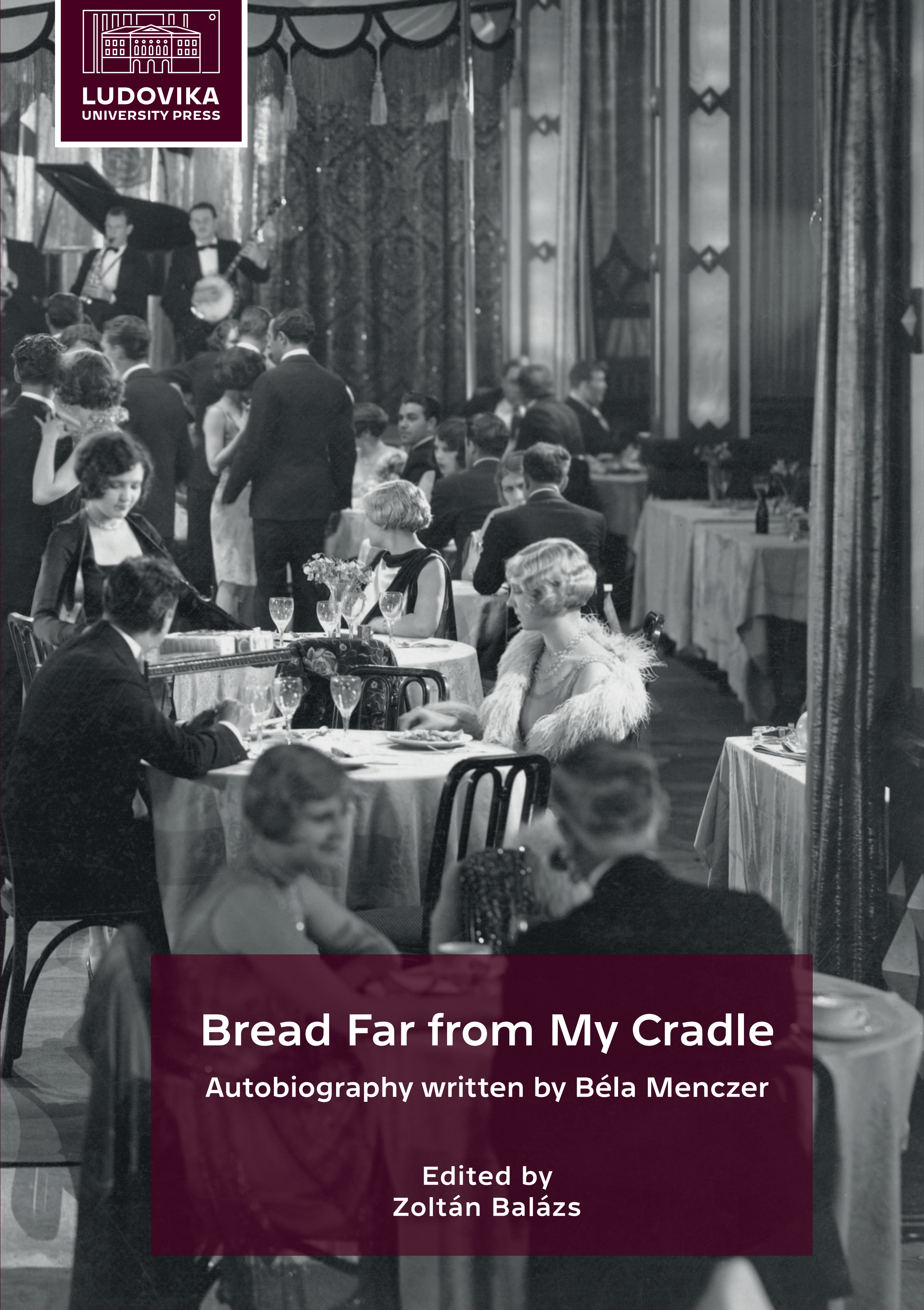

Bread Far from My Cradle

Autobiography written by Béla Menczer

Edited by
Zoltán Balázs

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Editor's Introduction

Béla Menczer was, by any standard, a unique figure even among the many more or less famous eccentrics, adventurers, famous scholars and politicians, of his generation.[1] The first part of his life was marked by leftism, mostly socialism, and he was a prominent second generation character in the Paris exile group around Count Mihály Károlyi. Having such radical-socialist views was nothing particularly uncommon within that generation of urban, mainly Budapest-based youth, as I shall explain below, and he did maintain good contacts with his former 'comrades' throughout his life. Despite, and here is the surprise, Menczer's very radical turn to conservatism in the 1940s, marked by Catholicism, with a social-agrarian tint, which, among others, led him to the rediscovery of the Catholic conservative thinkers of the 19th century, from Donoso Cortés to Clemens Metternich and Frédéric le Play.[2] However, twisting matters further perhaps, Menczer never relinquished his harsh criticism of Nazism, in this sense creating a credible continuity with his anti-fascist youth. Again, exceptionally in his generation (though there were some, but only a few, other such people), Menczer volunteered for military service as a soldier, insisting on combat service, and interestingly enough, in de Gaulle's troops. His experiences in Africa certainly belong to the most fascinating part of this biography. He remained a conservative until his death, but unlike other anti-communist émigrés, for instance, the novelist Sándor Márai, Menczer visited Hungary a couple of times, and was prepared to help Hungarian historians of working class movements to paint a more objective picture of the first decades of the century. It is difficult to think of anyone, except Menczer, who was on equally good terms with Admiral Miklós Horthy, Archduke Otto von Habsburg, Count Mihály Károlyi, Oszkár Jászi (the leading theorist of the bourgeois radical movement), a great number of liberal émigrés in Paris from Russia, Italy and Spain, the deposed Emperor of Abyssinia, an innumerable number of Hungarian Communists in exile and later at home, and the so many Catholic clergymen, exiled by the Communists. Judged on this alone, Menczer would emerge as a Talleyrand figure; but in fact, his views were remarkably consistent and insightful, if sometimes a bit doctrinaire.

He was born in Budapest, in 1902. This meant that he was saved from serving in the Austrian–Hungarian army in the First World War, but also that he was deeply involved, as an adolescent, in the radical and socialist youth movement known as the Galilei Circle. This group was a loose network of young bourgeois radicals, under the auspices of the Society of Social Sciences which comprised of like-minded radical thinkers, scholars, political activists, politicians, public intellectuals and journalists. 'Bourgeois' refers to the social origins of the members, as the industrial proletariat was mostly under the influence of Social Democracy (those times significantly more radical and more strongly committed to Marxist ideology than today). Anarchism and Christian Socialism was also present in Hungary, but anarchists were small in number and often somewhat esoteric, whereas Christian Socialism was mostly detested by the radicals and Social Democrats as being wholly under the control of the aristocracy and the churches. Menczer was a student of one of the best schools in Budapest, as were so many scions of wealthy families of Jewish origin. These families were entirely assimilated to the ruling élite, and usually (and practically) supported the liberal government (committed to the Compromise of 1867), but, as good political taste prescribed it those days, they sympathised with the ‘independentist’ (and nationalist) opposition. The united opposition defeated, for the first time since the Compromise, the Liberal Party in 1905. This was followed by much political turbulence. There was a certain ‘understanding’ towards the radicalism of the new generation, as it was clear that the country had to undergo serious reforms. The new century brought new issues to the forefront of politics which, the young generation (mostly based in Budapest) thought, the old parliamentary élites were incapable of solving. The radicals certainly considered themselves as having the clues to and being endowed with the necessary knowledge for reforming the country in a profound, perhaps revolutionary way. Menczer gives a fair account of all this in his biography.

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[1] For a short summary of Menczer's life and thought (partly based on the manuscript version of the biography), see Lee Congdon (1999): The Evolution of a Conservative: Béla Menczer (1902–1983). *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 40(153), 100–109.

[2] See *Catholic Political Thought 1789–1848,* edited by Béla Menczer. Illinois: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, introduced by Russell Kirk.

The war only contributed to their radicalisation. Many of them joined the Revolution in 1918 but not all of them adhered to the Bolshevik dictatorship. Menczer, for one, was already critical of the Communist takeover (though he was only 17 at that time) but no less angered by the subsequent rightist radical regime, and the vengeful terrorism of the Hungarian version of the Freikorps. Soon he was imprisoned (as a nominal leader of a leftist student group) and sentenced to jail for a couple of months. He was set free then, but his freedoms were curtailed, hence he decided to emigrate and join the Paris exile group around Károlyi, in which he acted, so to speak, as a non-commissioned liaison officer to other émigré groups. In the thirties, the group basically ceased to exist, as the Horthy regime consolidated its power and embraced substantial political and social reforms.

However, anti-fascism became more and more relevant. Menczer was pleased to see the conversion of some rightist radicals to moderate conservatism, as well as many conservatives taking clear side against the Italian and later German fascism and Nazism. He felt more at home with them, especially after the invasion of France by Hitler’s troops, and he decided to fight for the good cause of liberty in de Gaulle’s army. But he also underwent a slow conversion, not only to conservatism, but also to Catholicism. Uniquely, it was in Freetown, Africa, where he decided to join the Catholic Church.

His military service lasted until the end of the war, but he saw very little action, as the many months in Africa made him sick of malaria, and he was unfit for combat service by 1944. He went on to work for de Gaulle’s press service, and later settled in England with his English Catholic wife. This is a point where his biography ends; the rest of his life was more restrained and peaceful.

Menczer continued to make a living as a journalist. What he could rely on, in the first place, was his unusual talent for languages. It is not an exaggeration to call him a polyglot as he spoke and wrote fluently in German, English, French, Hungarian, and had good knowledge of Spanish and Italian, and also some Arabic (plus Latin and Greek from school). His career developed into what we today would call that of a political analyst, specialised in international relations, with an expertise in Central European and Balkan affairs. At certain points, he drew memoranda and similar papers, attempting to have some influence on political decisions-makers: it remains to be searched whether Menczer was ever able to achieve any success in this respect.

Already before the war, during his London years, Menczer began to study Central European history, mainly that of the 19th century, becoming completely disillusioned by the revolutionary movement. Gradually, he developed a consistent 'high and dry' conservative reading of the 19th century, something that was out of tune of the atmosphere of the 1960s, and that would have been impossible to publish in Hungary during Communism. He never became a professional, academic historian, and his oftentimes very accurate and insightful analyses, often based on an intimate knowledge of sources, remain those of the journalist-analyst that he always was. Especially from the mid-sixties, Menczer also tried to engage in a debate with Austrian historians who, as he saw, had been astonishingly ignorant (and on the whole, unappreciative) of the historical and political realities of the Hungarian 'half' of the Dual Monarchy. Again, whether he could make any difference is another question that cannot be answered here. Finally, Menczer was a good lay aesthete, especially in the field of literature. He is the author of the entry on Hungarian Literature in the Encyclopedia Britannica, out of which he produced and published a concise and well-balanced history of Hungarian literature.[3] He shared a Paris room with the novelist Gyula Illyés and translated a few poems of Attila József into French: both authors are today classics in Hungary; and he also contributed to literary papers as critic in Paris (see more on this in this book). Menczer also participated in various PEN Congresses, underlining his identity as a writer, too.

This autobiography exists in a manuscript form in the Petőfi Literary Museum Budapest. Menczer visited Hungary in the seventies three times (1972, 1975, 1978) and got into contact with historians working on the history of workers' movements, one of the main foci of the communist regime ideology. Part of this was the publication of biographies. Many of them were autobiographies, under the book series *Tények és tanúk* [Facts and Witnesses], with identical layouts, many written by Menczer's former comrades. Their publication was meant to give a personal tone to the 'heroic age' of the early 20th century socialist movements. This was also a sort of rehabilitation for them, as until the sixties this early phase had been generally considered to be a failure, with the suggestion that the success of communism in Hungary was overwhelmingly the achievement of the Soviet Union which liberated Hungary. As a matter of course, these autobiographies were still very partial, always underlining the efforts of the Communist Party (illegal, of course) and the great persecution it suffered during the Horthy regime. But the numerous small details revealed in these memoirs certainly made them readable and sometimes interesting.

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[3] A longer version appeared in a book form: *A Commentary on Hungarian Literature,* first in 1956 and recently, in a second edition (Hassel Street Press, 2021).

Since his name appears in some of them, Menczer was asked to give a long interview to the historian Ilona Fodor. This appeared in the review *Valóság* (10/1975) (with some omissions that were certainly considered politically ‘incorrect’). He was also given other non-(yet) published manuscripts to read. A source of writing this autobiography must have been related to these activities and events. But Menczer also kept a diary, a series of Journals, recording mostly on his travel experiences and related reflections, which he often refers to in this text. However, they, and other referenced manuscripts of his, have not yet been published. The resulting text mostly retains the form of a memoir, abundant in (and often overloaded with) names and contacts, but Menczer intersperses the text sometimes with dialogues (most probably illustrating rather than quoting a conversation); diary-like reflections, for instance, on the atmosphere of Budapest and Paris, and summary evaluations of the various stages of his life.

* * *

Editorial decisions: all additions to the main text, mostly birth and death dates as well as minor clarifications, are given in [brackets]. Since the manuscript is typewritten, its way of emphasising or marking things is mostly by underlining (sometimes added by hand), and Menczer often uses single and double quotation marks, for instance, in case of journal titles. Underlines and most quotation marks have been removed. Double quotation marks are preserved for proper quotations (though Menczer does not always provide sources, and some quotations are clearly fictional), single marks are used to modify the word’s meaning. Journal and book titles, as well as emphases, where necessary, have been transcribed into italics. Occasionally, Menczer repeats pieces of information, probably because he forgot to have mentioned them earlier; all superfluous repetitions have been deleted from the text.

Menczer writes sometimes in French. These sentences are translated into English within the main text. Sometimes he translated himself (for instance, quotations in Latin) that have been checked. Menczer translated most Hungarian given names into their English version (though there remained some exceptions, for instance, for some reason he rendered ‘Gyula’ as ‘Julius’ in the case of Gyula Andrássy but never in the case of Gyula Illyés). In accordance with current customs, and for the sake of an easier identification, for instance, on the internet, all given names are rendered here in their proper Hungarian version and with using the Hungarian alphabet, except for their appearance in geographical names (travel books also use ‘Margaret Island’ instead of ‘Margitsziget’ in Budapest). Capitalised nouns are less fashionable today, the text has been adjusted to this.

Autobiographies and memoirs sometimes contain factual errors. Thus, one should not read them as entirely reliable historical sources. Nonetheless, a few obvious errors are corrected here in footnotes: as Menczer was a historian, he would have surely approved of this procedure.

It is not entirely clear what potential readership Menczer had in mind. The manuscript was written in English, suggesting an English readership, and the author does try to clarify certain issues to readers unfamiliar with Hungarian history. But often he writes as if he was addressing someone who has intimate knowledge on Hungary, especially on the interwar period, and sometimes uses nicknames rather casually, without referring to the proper name, again suggesting an atmosphere of intimacy, more proper in a Hungarian context. Further, he often refers to books that were published only in Hungarian (though he translates the titles, which may cause confusion to an English reader). All this suggests that he was perhaps thinking of a Hungarian edition of the text in the first place, calculating with a better chance of having a Hungarian translation than vice versa. Be it as it may, since this edition appears in English, wherever it seemed necessary, further information was provided in footnotes.

Since the biography is extremely rich in names, as one of Menczer's apparent intentions was to emphasise his extraordinarily wide network of political and social acquaintances, rather than his personal and family life, it was a difficult decision as to what further information the editor should provide the reader with. First, less known Hungarian personalities are briefly introduced in a footnote at their first appearance in the text. In many cases Menczer himself gives further details and often evaluations on his acquaintances at various places. In case of a perfunctory reference to foreigner contacts he had, birth and death dates are given in [brackets] in the main text. Figures who have had some public status are also introduced briefly in footnotes.

Menczer divided his biography into two volumes, the volumes into parts, and the parts into chapters. To make matters even more complicated, some main sections contain a foreword or preface, while others do not. Given the length of the text, the various parts were integrated into a single volume with chapters, preserving the original loci of forewords and other non-chapter texts. Accordingly, intertextual references to the original structure were removed.

Finally, let me express my gratitude to Ágoston Fáber who made a very conscientious review of the text, corrected numerous mistakes and suggested important improvements.

I trust that Menczer's unique development and experiences are worth reading and pondering about. Even if his post-war years are covered by his Journals which are not part of this memoir, the most formative and interesting turning points are all in here. For those interested in his intellectual career, Lee Congdon's article provides further information. And of course, the Menczer Archive (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) holds further files, an immense correspondence, Menczer's published papers and articles, which are all worth researching.

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Chapter 1

Old ‘Feudal’ Hungary

First, I must tell you something of ‘old feudal Hungary’, which will explain why the peculiar charm of this country keeps us faithful Hungarians for a lifetime, even abroad and far away in other continents. People no longer wear (on ordinary occasions) those splendid costumes which you see in tourist brochures. Those evening walks on the Danube embankment under the gas lamps, the excesses and the gaiety of feast days, the one-storey Turkish houses in the old Tabán district, the eighteenth-century yellow houses and Maria Theresa palaces between the Vienna Gate and St George’s Square, Old Buda and the real Turkish baths, the little steamers which took you to St Andrew’s Island, to the Visegrád ruins and to the Basilica at Esztergom, the duels over love affairs which figure in the novels of the last century (our [Mór] Jókai, [Kálmán] Mikszáth and [Gyula] Krúdy) – may not have made Budapest more real than the Vienna of Schnitzler was real. The old frugal and dignified way of life of the ordinary people has gone for good, as in other countries. Are the hills above the Danube so much more beautiful than those above the Rhine, one may ask? Yet there are few Hungarians living abroad who are not deeply attached to that dream Hungary, best exemplified by certain old national memories of the last hundred years or so.

On the old Stefania Avenue (named in honour of the Archduke Rudolf’s unhappy wife) there used to be the Corso or parade of Sandlaufers and of riders on horseback. People stopped to point out certain famous ladies and gentlemen in their carriages on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings: “Do you see that rider? That is István Tisza” (Prime Minister 1903–1905 and 1913–1917). “Do you see that lady driving her tilbury? She is the Archduchess Augusta.” “That is … of the Comedy Theatre. She has a new Count to drive her carriage, the last time it was So and So.” “Who is that young rider – an Esterházy?” and so on. Budapest had plenty of celebrities and plenty of corsos. People on foot strolled along the Danube embankment in the early hours of the morning, or on summer afternoons and Sunday mornings in the spring. “Où sont-ils, Vierge souveraine, et où sont les neiges d’antan? [Where are they, oh Sovereign Virgin, / Oh where are the snows of yesteryear?]”[4] Everything that once made the Budapest crowds stare has disappeared: [the playwright] Ferenc Molnár [1872–1952] with his monocle; the famous theatre star of her day, Zsazsa Fedák, with her skirt slit down the centre to show off her celebrated legs to full advantage;[5] the top hat, and white tie of Lajos Hatvany,[6] the sugar millionaire, author, editor and patron of the literary avant-garde, the big cigar of Ede Ujházy, the comic actor of the National Theatre; the flower in the button-hole of the celebrated and eccentric novelist Krúdy; the famous beards of István Tisza and Albert Apponyi, the leading parliamentarians; the white gaiters of Gyula Andrássy the Younger [1860–1929], leader of the dissident Liberals and foremost rival of Tisza; the exquisite hats of another actress Aranka Várady [1886–1966] (my Ophelia, Miranda and Roxane). Nowadays politics are in the hands of bureaucrats; literature, the stage and television have their celebrities. Will parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts tell plenty of stories about them, going back at least two generations?

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[4] François Villon: *Ballade of Ladies of Time Gone By.* Translated by Richard Stokes.

[5] Sarolta ‘Zsazsa’ Fedák (1879–1955) was one of the most popular actresses, later the playwright Ferenc Molnár’s second wife.

[6] Baron Lajos Hatvany (1880–1961) was co-founder of the journal *Nyugat,* which exerted great influence on 20th century Hungarian literature. Hatvany supported the revolution and emigrated only at the end of the Soviet Republic, returned and was pardoned, but emigrated once again in 1938, finally returning to Hungary after the war, where he taught at the Eötvös Loránd University.

Nobody can claim that everything was perfect in the Francis Joseph era, or that the Tisza–Andrássy era was a golden age. There was no doubt some shining gold in it, but some rusty iron also. Nevertheless, Budapest and Hungary had their own character. For the Millenium of the Magyar conquest in 1896, the statues of the Árpádian Kings were erected in the City Park, and beyond the bridge copies of famous Hungarian buildings which are still standing today, the Hunyad castle and the medieval Ják Abbey, for example. The Millenium was a genuine Hungarian celebration, a feast of national memories. Even the sternest critics of that era still felt at home in the Budapest of the early years of the twentieth century. The most famous, though controversial, poet of the day, Endre Ady [1877–1919] often went to stay in Paris for weeks or months at a time, he came home again and again. The political leaders, radical and liberal politicians, with all their interest in contemporary English and French trends and intellectual fashions, remained deeply attached to that old Budapest and became reluctant émigrés when, in their forties, they were compelled to live abroad not so away at first, in Vienna, the first station for all the Hungarian émigrés of the 1920s.

Our great and incomparable novelist Krúdy [1878–1933], writing at the turn of the century, made an immortal collection of old-style Magyar eccentrics, a certain type of whom he thought to be incompatible with the twentieth century, and unlikely to be seen again. In his *Late Young Gentleman,*[7] set in the Park Hotel on St Margaret's Island, he has the ice floes in the Danube "floating in good order, for Francis Joseph was King of the land and everything went in good order under such a King".[8] His 'nobles' despised the 'aristocrats', as they did in real life. The 'nobles' (not necessarily titled, more or less the equivalent of the landed gentry in England, for example) were people who were attached to their ancestral soil, whether they were Catholic or Calvinist, well-to-do, but on principle never rich. The 'aristocrats' were the rich landowners, cosmopolitan and uprooted adventurers, according to the 'nobles'. The aristocrats seldom visited their own estates, except for hunting and shooting parties organised in honour of Princes of Wales and visitors of that sort and were better known in the Casinos of Budapest and the big cities, and for their great family feuds than for their devotion to their estates.

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[7] Menczer refers to a novel by Krúdy (no English translation could be found, the title [*Boldogult úrfikoromban*] is hard to translate: *In the Long-Gone Days of My Master-Age*), not exactly quoting it, but the text is indeed about the 'natural order' of Francis Joseph's rule.

[8] A free quotation from the novel's first page.

The 'nobles' lived on their medium-sized properties, cultivated their gardens and their vineyards and were often the vice-governors of their counties. (The vice-governors were elected, the royal governors were nominated by the Crown; the real master of the county was the vice-governor, while the royal governor was generally a figurehead.)[9] They were public-spirited and passionate local politicians. Only if they were very ambitious, or unduly impoverished, did they ever take a job in a Budapest or a Vienna office – a dangerous step to take, for they might become 'aristocrats', although this class did in fact produce some empire-builders, for example Benjámin Kállay (1839–1905), Head of the Oriental (i.e. Near East) Department of the Ballhaus [the Foreign Office], and later Minister of Bosnia–Herzegovina, and prolific historical and political author who was familiar with many languages and literatures.

One such Magyar eccentric was my godfather in Calvinist baptism, Uncle[10] Béla Komjáthy, a barrister and member of Parliament. There is now no trace of the Komjáthy Villa in Zugló [a Budapest district] and its huge garden. What happened to his immense collection of some two thousand pipes, twelve thousand or so books, prints and objets d'art, hundreds and hundreds of bottles of Tokaji shown to visitors as one of the finest wine cellars in Hungary, the hundreds of cartoons on his political career? He spent about thirty to thirty-five years in Parliament and appeared as defence counsel in memorable political trials and libel actions between 1870 and 1905. There were also the Komjáthy family archives, with many valuable autographs from Hungarian literature and history. I remember only the last ten years of Uncle Béla as a gentleman in his sixties; he died aged about seventy in 1916, shortly before the Emperor-King, to whose era he belonged as one of its most famous characters. I remember his embonpoint, which was of such a size that we had a huge armchair, bought by my mother for the express purpose of getting this distinguished visitor into our dining room or garden. He came over from his villa three or four times a week and on Christmas Eve and Sylvester Night he was our regular guest for dinner. He was immortalised, becoming a household word long before his retirement from politics, for one of his exploits which was recounted in a short story by Jókai. (Jókai was a friend of my mother's sister and incidentally watched me making my first steps in the park, according to an often-told story of my mother.)

The immortal story was as follows. In 1877–1878, Parliament debated the new Penal Code which finally became the Legislative Act V of 1878. A lively controversy arose in the Judicial Commission concerning duels. One body of opinion claimed that killing in a duel should be treated as 'common homicide' and wounding in a duel as 'grievous bodily harm'. This view was contradicted by some members of the Penal Code Committee. They argued that a man killed or wounded in a duel had accepted the conditions worked out by the seconds of both parties and had gone to the terrain with an equal intention of killing or wounding his opponent. Therefore, he could not deserve the same protection under the law as an innocent victim. While this controversy was at its height, Béla Komjáthy, spokesman for the Opposition, stood up. He proposed that the law should permit duels, provided they were fought with the patented Komjáthy pistols, and he solemnly placed a model of this weapon on the table of the House, to the resounding laughter of its members. The Komjáthy pistol was devised not to hit the opponent facing it, but by firing sideways, it was to hit the chief seconds and witnesses of both parties. Uncle Béla claimed that duels, called in the language of the time *affaires d'honneur,* were caused by the seconds and witnesses of the protagonists, who delighted in such a silly code where the principals only were at risk. Very likely he was right.

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[9] History books sometimes render the Hungarian 'főispán' as lord-lieutenant (rather than royal governor) and the 'alispán' as deputy lieutenant. The French terms of prefect and vice-prefect would also do.

[10] Even in contemporary Hungarian, calling an elderly man 'uncle' does not necessarily implicate kinship but politeness. Compare the English Mister (Master) title. Béla Komjáthy (1847–1916) was indeed a renowned lawyer and politician.

Another good story concerns his political catechism, to which he subjected me and his little grandson, also called Béla: "Who does everything wrong?" – "Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria." "Who does everything right?" – "His Apostolic Majesty King Francis Joseph of Hungary." – "What is the relation between these two persons? God is one in three persons, and He is perfect. The king is not perfect, but he is one in two persons, one bad and one good." – "What was the good king's best action?" – "That he kicked Mr Lipót Kossuth out of his palace." (Kossuth's son, who was really called Ferenc, had accepted the Austrian Order of St Leopold [Lipót in Hungarian] from the Emperor and Uncle Béla called him henceforth Leopold Kossuth in disapproval.)

He also taught me two useful principles which I have more or less kept to throughout my life. The first was that "a young man should read everything, even old newspapers about to be thrown away. They are full of spelling mistakes, printers' errors, bad journalistic grammar. By correcting them as you read, you will learn correct spellings and good grammar". The second one ran along these lines: "An old man should look forward to death joyfully. He is bored by everything that has been said again and again in his long existence. At last, something will happen that can only occur once, for nobody dies more than once."

I lived too late for duelling, which I very much regret. My Uncle Emil (a real one) told me it was great fun in the eighteen-nineties. The penalty was an honourable custody for a week in the state prison, so Hungarian gentlemen, knowing they were to fight a duel, had the habit of informing their wives that they would be away for a week in Vienna, where they had business to attend to. I am sure that some way must have been found to prevent mutual killing. Either the bullet had to be shot from an 'about turn' position, which made it almost impossible to take aim, or jumping aside must have been allowed. Cavalry swords *sans bandages* (i.e. with elbows unbandaged, so the wrist only could move freely) were used for ten or fifteen minutes before shots were exchanged, so that the chief second could stop the affaire, stating exhaustion or *premier sang* as soon as one of the parties drew blood, so that the pistols were not therefore needed. Another way out was to fix the exchange of shots from such a distance that killing the opponent was impossible.

The story of one of the most famous of all Hungarian duels goes back to the 1870s. Both protagonists were known to be unlikely killers. Mór Wahrmann [1832–1992], the Jewish banker and Member of Parliament of the Liberal Party of [Ferenc] Deák (the latter a great constitutional lawyer and the real architect of the Compromise of 1867 between

Austria and Hungary) and Ottó Herman [1835–1914], the scientist [ornithologist] and a former companion of Kossuth in exile, and Member of Parliament of the Independence Party, were fighting a duel over a slightly anti-Jewish remark made by the latter during a turbulent scene in Parliament. Mór was very short-sighted. Ottó was hard of hearing. The offence being stated as mutual, the shots were to be simultaneous. When both had fired, Mór wondered: “Is that Goyim still standing there?” and Ottó asked his second: “Has that Jew fired his shot yet?”

Another good duelling story was told me concerning our great poet Ady, by whom I do not remember, but surely by somebody who knew the characters intimately. Endre Ady in the early 1900s challenged the tenor of the Royal Opera Company, Béla Környei, to a duel. Swords clashed for a few minutes. Then came the ritual words of the chief second: “Gentlemen, as in the view of all the witnesses, honour is satisfied, I invite you to declare yourselves reconciled.” Ady: “I insist on an apology.” Környei: “My dear Andy, you challenged me because I called you a fool. I came here to play this silly game with swords. The last thing I would wish for is to kill my best friend, although I acted as though I wanted to kill you. Thus, I acknowledge that I am a bigger fool than you are and by coming here today I have proved it.” The opponents then shook hands, while the witnesses laughed.[11]

Then there was the ever glamorous and legendary café life of old Hungary. The heyday of the Café New York – so named because the proprietor had re-emigrated from the United States[12] – and which was situated in the neighbourhood of the chief newspaper editorial offices and the National Theatre, was about 1905–1910, when writers and journalists would sit up half the night, talking in classic Budapest or Vienna café-style. Every young literary man went there to see Krúdy and Ady drinking at one table, or Ferenc Molnár (whose plays in translation are still a posthumous success on the London stage in the 1970s) surrounded by actors and actresses at another. When the waiter received a good tip, he would point out a young man sitting in a corner: “You see him? That is young Archduke Joseph, who comes here incognito to admire Mademoiselle … of the National Theatre.” Old Baron Fritzi [Frigyes] Podmaniczky,[13] as old as Francis Joseph himself (and perhaps the last surviving companion-in-exile of Kossuth, but now fully reconciled to the Emperor-King) walked on to the New York terrace every mid-morning, wearing his grey bowler hat, his black and grey check jacket and grey trousers of a perfect Second Empire Paris elegance, some thirty-five years after the fall of the Second Empire, his very tall, slim figure enhanced by an Imperial side-beard in order to honour some younger genius with his “Comment vas-tu mon cher? [How do you do, my dear?]” or to kiss some young prima donna’s hand. Somehow all the addicts of the ‘New York’ managed to live. Paying for food and drinks was not altogether forbidden, but not particularly insisted upon. The head waiter was in all the secrets, and knew that some big landowner from Transylvania, for example, would be happy to settle Monsieur Krúdy's unpaid bills; that Baron Lajos Hatvany, the editor of *Nyugat* and younger son of the sugar dynasty, and his brother Francis, the painter, were prepared to pay any bills for the table of Ady and the *Nyugat*[14] authors and so on. The old Café New York was closed down after the Second World War and the floors above it are now newspaper offices.

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[11] According to the sources, Ady fought two duels, but neither of them with Béla Környei. The story might have happened between two other figures. By the way, Ady was highly critical of duelling.

[12] In fact, it was the New York Life Insurance Company whose headquarters the building initially was.

[13] Baron Frigyes Podmaniczky (1824–1907) had a colourful life, his most prominent and memorable function was chairing the Budapest Commission for Public Works, thanks to which he was practically able to develop Budapest into a great, imperial European metropolis.

It was on those once so famous legs of the singer and dancer Zsazsa Fedák that Budapest jumped from the nineteenth into the twentieth century; it was through Molnár's monocle that Budapest looked into the new age. Of the monocle, Molnár made a classic aphorism: "It is for a man like a pretty and elegant wife. He takes it, because he looks better with it, though he sees better without it." Zsazsa Fedák was the saucy girl of a big modern city, with her long skirt split to show her legs, the only perfect thing about her, for her face was more grotesque than pretty. Yet it was not Molnár, but the grave, rebellious, tormented and prophetic Endre Ady who hailed her in a poem: "This girl is perfection itself" [literal quotation from the poem]. Paul Hevesy[15] says that Zsazsa was once, in about 1908, the guest of the Imperial and Royal Embassy in London (where Paul was a junior secretary at the time) and that she delighted King Edward VII. This is certainly true. Paul's recollections are reliable and precise, although he attributes beauty to her which she denied in her own *Memoirs,* saying she was short-sighted, had freckles all over her face in summer and was slightly cross-eyed.[16] Molnár put her into *Liliom* [written in 1909] where she did very well as a girl belonging to the underworld, but his later plays appealed less to her, as she was not fit to act the sophisticated *Dames du monde,* which were a characteristic of Molnár's later plays, and so well-fit for the talent of his third wife, Lily Darvas [1902–1974]. Molnár was in his own way a landmark of the 1900s. All our nineteenth century authors – Mikszáth, [Ferenc] Herczeg [1863–1954], for example, came from the provinces and reached Budapest when they were twenty or thirty. Molnár was born there and from a Jewish middle class background. This was new in Hungarian literature. Previous Jewish authors – József Kis [1843–1921] for example – came from the patriarchal provincial Jewry, his poetry was an echo of the village synagogue. There was in Austria and Hungary a Jewish patriciate, famous Jewish scholars, rich bankers, famous Jewish doctors belonged to it, and many of them left Jewry, not in order to make a better career, but because they had a daughter to marry and the prospective son-in-law was a Christian, or because they spent their whole lives in a Christian ambiance and did not wish to remain strangers in it. Liberalism was the fashion of the day, and it was much easier to be a liberal in politics, and easier to be a Protestant, or even a Catholic, than to be a Jew; the Rabbinate was very dogmatic, and the Jewish ambiance was more intolerant than the Christian one.

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[14] The *Nyugat* [West] was the most influential literary journal in Hungary, operating between 1908–1941.

[15] Paul/Pál de Hevesy (1883–1988) lived through ages. He was a career diplomat of the Monarchy, and specialised later in agro-diplomacy, also writing scholarly papers. He was brother of André (Andor) Hevesy and the Nobel Laurate chemist György Hevesy. Hevesy left the diplomatic service only in 1942 (not earlier, as Menczer later writes), after the suicide of Prime Minister Pál Teleki, his former schoolmate.

[16] The first memoirs of her appeared in 1929 (Budapest), the rest of her turbulent life is recorded in another volume, published posthumously in 2009 (also in Budapest).

The Jewish middle class to which Molnár belonged was neither the Jewish aristocracy (like Hatvany and the other sugar barons,) nor the patriarchal village Jewry. It kept from Jewry a kind of cynical wit, a humorous sort of kindness, and perhaps one or two big feasts in the year out of consideration for a pious grandmother, who was keen on a last link with the synagogue. These Jews were like those Christians who still send out Christmas cards and give their children Christmas presents, but never go near a church between Christmases.

Cosmopolitanism was the aristocratic hallmark in Hungary. Already in the previous century, [Count] István Széchenyi [1791–1860] ostentatiously misspelt in all the five languages he knew in his Journals. The Andrássy ladies objected to István Tisza’s pure native accent and impeccable Magyar grammar, for at that time a ‘true aristocrat’ had at least to make a French ‘r’ and make his ‘h muet,’ as Móric Esterházy did. I met him once when he was very old and impoverished in Vienna, but his accent still betrayed that he had had a French tutor before he could speak or spell his mother tongue, and that at the age of eighteen (round about 1900) he was sent to Oxford where, according to Robert W. Seton-Watson, his fellow undergraduate and later propagandist for Masaryk, he lighted his cigar with a pound note, a story which Mihály Károlyi firmly denied, telling me that Count Móric had the reputation of being a miser, even in his youth.[17]

Molnár and his companions, journalists, authors and playwrights Jenő Heltai [1879–1945], Menyhért Lengyel [1880–1974], Tamás Kóbor [1867–1942], Lajos Biró,[18] Sándor Bródy [1863–1924], were cosmopolitan, not in the old aristocratic way, but in the new bohemian manner. They were often in Vienna, more often still in Berlin, they all visited Paris and Rome; already before 1914 they had good agents in London and in America – and they never visited a Hungarian village, unless they had a holiday in a High Tatra resort, on Lake Balaton, or on the Croatian coast of the Adriatic, for example.[19]

A Budapest café frequented by literary men, actors and actresses was more distant from a Magyar village inn (‘csárda’) than from Broadway in New York, or Piccadilly in London and of the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. I am sure that some of these famous figures of the café world had never seen a real peasant in their lives. As to la Bohème, its law was strict. An author was excluded from his café unless he had chosen a lady from the café world – an actress, a woman writer, a daughter of one of the press lords, or one of the avant-garde publishers.

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[17] Count Móric Esterházy (1881–1960), for a couple of weeks Prime Minister in 1918, was jailed both by the Hungarian and German Nazis and the Communists. He made it to Vienna only in 1956. He was the grandfather of the novelist Péter Esterházy (1950–2016).

[18] Lajos Biro (1880–1948), a highly prolific novelist, journalist, screenwriter, also in Hollywood and London.

[19] Today, only Lake Balaton is part of Hungary.

Here is a postscript going back to the days of 1921, of which I was reminded one day in 1957, when the post brought me a letter from Imre Veér in America; announcing the imminent publication of his *Memoirs* by a Hungarian publisher there.[20]

Imre Veér was just such a Magyar eccentric of café society of the old days. To be frank, he was a fool in politics as in life, but he had much heart and real knowledge. There were many anecdotes about him, but this one is authentic. It was in the summer of 1921, a few months before the ill-fated legitimist coup d'état.[21] The young people had a table at the Café Central, where we could observe such famous characters as Zoltán Szász [1877–1940], the essayist and playwright, complete with monocle, Dezső Szabó [1879–1945] the novelist, with the Byron collar a century too late, every now and then even [Dezső] Kosztolányi [1885–1936], the poet, alone, at a table and writing, at the most talking to Laci [László] Békeffi [1891–1962], the actor and *compère,* and Frigyes Karinthy [1887–1938], the humourist and playwright, inseparable friends (though Kosztolányi was a right-wing legitimist since the communist rule of Béla Kun, while Békeffi and Karinthy remained sympathisers of the moderate old progressive Left-wing).

Imre Veér was much less appreciated as a writer by the critics and the public. His conversation on literature and on life was anyway more interesting than his books, of which he published one each year. Not despairing of finding followers in politics and admirers in literature, he often sat at our table, carefully avoided by all young men over twenty-five years of age, and by all who had produced a slim volume of verse, often the first step and the last towards the immortality of their names. He was supposed to be closely connected with Lya, the reddish-blonde vamp known (in varying degrees) to all of us. She was not a beauty, but there was something fascinatingly sensual about her (the word 'sexy' was not yet invented). We thought her a great demi-mondaine whom literature would make famous. She was hardly more than twenty-four but boys of twenty who had fallen in love with her when they were seventeen began to sigh over her fading beauty and the *neiges d'antan* [the snow of yesteryear]. One day Imre Veér gave a lecture and Lya did not come. On being teased, Imre Veér said she was ill, then as the story progressed, she was in hospital … was on her deathbed … light-hearted women like St Mary Magdalene must be forgiven much because they had loved much…. Suddenly the story was interrupted as Lya entered the café, slightly more perfumed and with more rouge on her lips than ever before and sat down at a distant table. In a few moments she knew all. "For heaven's sake, Imre, what nonsense are you talking? You saw me dying?" Imre Veér, adjusting his monocle, wet with tears: "Alas, it is the truth, you are dead for me, and who else matters in this story but myself?"

He took revenge on Lya by decrying the female sex and praising homo-sex in his next novel, a criminal offence under the Horthy regime. I last saw her in Paris in 1926. She lived in a fine hotel, where she invited me and Gyula Illyés[22] for a drink. She had married a Romanian diplomat about three years before this and became a great lady. Imre Veér turned up in the conversation and she said to me: “Was there ever anything male in me that attracted him?” – “No Madame” – I replied. – “If I had ever thought so, I would not have come here to revive old memories.” – “Oh! I am reassured!” said Lya. My last meeting with poor Imre Veér took place in a Caritas Home for old refugees in Munich in 1955, where he shared a room with another Hungarian refugee. He received my wife and me very affectionately, forgetting, as I did, that thirty years before, in 1925, we separated on a bad quarrel. Later, he somehow got to America.

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[20] Imre Veér (1889–1959), see more on him later. No publication of Veér's memoirs could be found.

[21] Charles IV, King of Hungary (never formally abdicated) attempted to regain his throne on two occasions. His supporters – the legitimists – would have never called these events coups d'état.

Worldly success in the last century meant becoming a Member of Parliament. If a playwright, a novelist or an editor who was a famous café figure was elected to Parliament, he became a member of the ‘governing class’. For example, it would have been unthinkable that our great national poet [Mihály] Vörösmarty [1800–1850], the Prince of Poets, should not be a member of the 1848 Parliament, even if a silent one, whereas another well-known poet of that revolutionary and patriotic generation, [Sándor] Petőfi [1823–1849], was very bitter and disappointed at not being elected to the same Parliament.

An immense literature has been written by English, French and American scholars on the difference between the Magyars and the Slovaks, the Romanians, and the Croats. Few people realise that within the same language community there were even greater differences. It was not simply the difference between two nations as Disraeli for example described the rich and the poor of his day in England. We had the aristocrats, the upper gentry, the lower gentry, the well-to-do peasantry, the poor peasantry, the city patricians of provincial towns, the Magyars of Hungary, the Magyars of Transylvania, the clerical Catholics, the Liberal Catholics, the serious Protestants, the indifferent Protestants, the Jews, and within Jewry, the Jewish aristocracy, the Jewish patriciate, the patriarchal village Jewry, the Budapest middle class Jewry, the fanatically Orthodox Eastern Jewry and so on. Francis Joseph would have objected less to an Archduke of Austria marrying a tradesman’s daughter than a well-to-do peasant farmer would have objected to his son’s marriage to a poor peasant girl. No young lady of the aristocracy was as well chaperoned, lest she should fall in love with a young man of lower rank, than was a tradesman’s daughter, lest she should fancy a young man who would be useless to the family trade or shop. And in *la Bohème* of café life, we have just seen that its law was equally strict.

Perhaps it was not such a bad thing that society in old Hungary was so much divided. It meant in a way the assurance of a social dignity to everyone within his own sphere. A man felt his value for what he was. Achievement was considered grounds for promotion, though it is true that in many cases the family status was felt to be a bore in the third generation and the fourth, and a heavy burden if the fortune did not last, as it cannot possibly do so beyond three generations in a non-agrarian society.

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[22] Gyula Illyés (1902–1983) was Menczer’s companion and roommate in Paris. A novelist, essayist, poet, playwright and sociography-writer, he became the de facto leader of the ‘népi’ (völkisch) writers after the war. Illyés himself was very much of a European. He was also a protagonist of the Hungarian minorities abroad. Accordingly, he had an ambivalent relationship towards the Kádár regime which considered him an authentic representative of the peasantry, but was often chagrined for his ‘nationalism’. More on him later in this autobiography.

Now for the betyárs, the horse thieves.[23] The modern tourist can enjoy the atmosphere of the newly created Betyár Csárdák, or Horse Thief Inns, where the waiters are dressed as betyárs, but in point of fact these bandits are a fascinating part of Hungarian folklore and I have a good story about them in my own family, which I will relate in a moment.

The most famous of the betyárs was Sándor Rózsa, a folk hero who eventually died in prison in the late 1870s [1878]. Their heyday were the years of the 1840s to the 1850s, as we know from the reports of their exploits in the already well-developed press of those years in Budapest and Vienna. Moreover, they provided good subjects for novelists and short story writers, such as [Mór] Jókai. They had already been active in the previous century when the governments of Maria Theresa and Joseph II of the Habsburg Monarchy (like the governments of all the European monarchies) built a great network of highways to facilitate quick and easy communications. The ways to the Orient and Oriental trade, i.e. mainly with Turkey, to the Osman Empire, which had occupied Hungary for almost a hundred and fifty years, but became later the best market for Austrian products, lay principally through Hungary. These highways were protected by the armed forces of the Crown. Nevertheless, the coaches of the rich merchants (chiefly Greeks and Armenians) were often robbed on road from Vienna to the Orient by the betyárs. Much later, the betyárs had a particularly grand time. This was in the 1850s, after the war of 1849–1849 against the Habsburg Empire. The old administration in the Hungarian counties ceased to work, the Hungarian nobles serving in it having refused to cooperate under any other regime than the Hungarian one, which had been suspended after the war. So Austrian and Czech police officers were imported into Hungary by the imperial government. They were unaware of local conditions and did not even speak the language. They were so unpopular that many Hungarian gentlemen thought it a patriotic duty to help the robbers and horse thieves. So good were these betyár stories that Bismarck himself, who visited Hungary in 1852, recorded some of them in his *Gedanken und Erinnerungen,* his *Thoughts and Memories.*[24]

My grandfather Ignatius Menczer (who in the War of Independence had served as a medical officer to the rebel forces of Komárom which had been, in October 1849, to surrender) was round about 1860 Chief Medical Officer in the county of Heves. He was once called to the sickbed of a poor old peasant woman. As was his habit, he took no money from poor patients, since he was well paid by the county and was also the personal physician of the Archbishop of Eger, amongst other rich patients, not to mention the dowry of his wife, who was the daughter of a Vienna merchant banker. The poor old peasant woman had a son who was a betyár, and who was so grateful to my grandfather that one night he ‘stole into’ my grandfather’s stable a splendid riding horse. Unable to find its rightful owner, the doctor finally rode it on his rounds (anything from ten to twenty miles a day, somewhat frightened that the owner would one day recognise his horse).

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[23] Menczer calls these people “horse thieves”, but they were in effect outlaws, Robin Hood people, who, of course, did not refrain from horse theft.

[24] In fact, the stories can be read in *Bismarck auf der Reise in Ungarn. Tagebuch der Woche 23–29 Juni 1952 in Briefen* [Bismarck’s Journey in Hungary. Diary of the Week 23–29 June 1952, in Letters]. There is a bilingual (German–Hungarian) edition of 1988, Budapest, though Menczer must have had some other access to these memoirs.

Incidentally, my nephew, Dr Mihály Bogárdi [1925–2011], the third generation of doctors in the family, still has the silver plate marked *Rp* (i.e. Recipe in Latin, otherwise the prescription) which the town of Tiszafüred, in the county of Heves, gave to my grandfather on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee as Protomedicus of Heves in 1902, shortly before my birth. The inscription reads: “Signing hundreds of sheets marked with the letters *Rp* every year for fifty years, Dr Ignác Menczer, our illustrious fellow citizen, saved thousands of human lives and relieved an immeasurable amount of grave sufferings.” The apron and the symbolic silver trowel of the old freemason may have been thrown out by my father, who had no interest in freemasonry, but I have a vague memory of these objects and I was also told by my aunt Bertha, his daughter (who died in her eighties during the Second World War) that the Letter of Amnesty exempting Dr Ignác Menczer from further proceedings and signed by an Austrian and a Russian General at Komárom in October 1849*,* still existed. Dr Ignác was at that time only a Licenciatus of Medicine; the Doctorate was a higher degree in those days, which he acquired in 1852, when applying for the job of District Health Officer in the county of Heves. Many fine books in my nephew’s collection must come from the original Tiszafüred library of the old doctor; on my last visit to Tiszafüred in the spring of 1920 I saw very fine French and German books there, and it was there that I read Corneille and Racine, as well as Michelet’s French Revolution, but most of this library must be dispersed by now. My nephew Mihály also has some family books from my uncle Laci Berényi,[25] obviously collected in Vienna in the 1890s, where Uncle Laci was, in those days, correspondent of the then well-known Hungarian daily *Budapesti Hírlap* and where his wife, Aunt Hermina, I was many times told, had entertained Ibsen to tea. (Ibsen visited both Austria and Hungary in the 1880s and 1890s, when his plays were produced at the Burgtheater in Vienna and at the National Theatre in Budapest.) His huge, leather-covered, Francis Joseph-style editorial chair now stands in front of my nephew’s desk.

When the Hungarian county officials were restored to their duties by the Vienna Government a few years before the Compromise or reconciliation, of 1867, the betyárs had a more difficult time. Besides, the goods they used to steal were now being transported by the railways and the days of the highwaymen were numbered. I have often thought that in our days of highjacking and kidnapping, the old stories could rival the American Westerns on the screen. They are, all there, written down in particular in the novels of Jókai and Krúdy.

And finally, there is the memory of the Turkish baths in Budapest, the Rudas dating back to the years of the Turkish rule, which ended in 1686. The Rudas had at least twenty pools, ranging from the very hot to the very cold. There were also a dozen steam rooms of varying degrees of intensity, and coloured glass windows in all the drying-off rooms. It was an old Budapest habit to go to the Rudas at 6 AM after a night of drinking; by 9 AM the fellow came out sober and restored after one hour of steaming and two of deep sleep unless he had shot himself in consequence of card debts contracted in the course of the night. (This latter is a pure Krúdy touch.) According to Krúdy, round about 1900, a special police squad (not in plain clothes, but on the contrary, stark naked police inspectors) kept watch over the candidates for suicide in all the steam rooms of the Rudas, wet or dry. In the prudish 1920s of Horthy's Regency (which in no way resembled the naughty nineties of Krúdy's *Late Young Gentleman*) the naked police only watched homosexuals, for in that decade only political murder was a minor misdemeanour, homosexuality was a great crime – unlike in Germany, where homosexuality and political murder were soon to become the twin pillars of the Third Reich, or in the West, where homosexuality in the 1920s was Gide-like wisdom and Proustian aesthetics and finally the greatest bore in life!

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[25] László ‘Laci’ Berényi (1851–1931) was a journalist and worked as a foreign correspondent for various papers.

Chapter 2

Hungary after the Defeat of 1918

Now comes a different picture. It is impossible to describe Central Europe in 1918 after the defeat by the Allies – only the great satirical chronicler of Austria, Karl Kraus at his best, and the celebrated Hungarian poet Ady were the voices which expressed the whole sadness and the whole bitterness of that decaying world, but nobody can adequately translate these two authors into any other language, and those people who can read them in the original are often unable to think or feel in any language.

What was our youth? An expectation of doom, with the first signs of it already appearing. "This generation will not pass away until all these things are accomplished"[26] – my generation belongs to a part of European mankind which, by a higher will we do not know, has felt the whole agony of this century. Our youth was a long night in the Garden of Gethsemane and some of us were sweating blood in it if I may be allowed the metaphor. Yet Hungary was not a Jerusalem, not an Israel with a unique and special vocation; we had no temple, so some people would say. They are mistaken. Other nations were made out of the remnants of Rome. Hungary was made by baptism alone and has no meaning in history except insofar as the baptism of St Stephen in the year 1000 made it a Christian country. Hungary has been torn to pieces by its own tribes, like Israel of old. Hungary gave to the Emperors of Christian Rome (the Holy Roman Emperors) the title 'King of Jerusalem', and that country still awaits the call for its complete resurrection. I have written fragments of the history of my own old country myself, and the remainder of my life will not be enough to finish it. But I have recognised the history of my country and my time in the New Testament; in fact, the history of every nation and every age is contained in it.

I was a young revolutionary socialist and twenty years old in Regent Horthy's prison in Budapest; I was thirty in Berlin on the eve of Hitler's coming to power. I was forty in Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo, under General de Gaulle's regime and in his army. In my forties also I married my English wife Marjorie and became domiciled in London; in my fifties I renounced my birthright and became a British citizen. Since the end of the Second World War, I have continued my travels across the world and kept many volumes of Journals, which as the years have gone by, have shown me still holding my Diogenes lamp, looking into past and present history, in an attempt to understand and assess the truth about Man and our times.

How to explain the terrible weakness of human foresight? When I was ten years old, in 1912, most people in the Danubian countries expected the European war to break out, and that is why my early boyhood memories are so political. I could not understand why we were neutral in the Balkan War of 1912, a term I knew from my Latin grammar, but whose political meaning was a mystery to me. An old Turkish bey who wore a fez and spoke French, and whom my father addressed as Excellence, used to come to our house; he was a Consul-General or Plenipotentiary Minister of the Sultan, accredited to King Nikita of Montenegro.[27] When diplomatic relations were broken off between the two countries, I was fascinated when he showed me on the map his route home by ship down the Danube via Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest and through to the Black Sea. His assurance that the Turks would beat Nikita of Montenegro and his Allies (Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Peter of Serbia and George I of Greece) was thought to be excellent news for all the grown-ups, but this was beyond me. I had always heard that King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was a personal friend of my father (who acted as economic adviser to him) and who once sent me a present of a little boy's Bulgarian national dress and sword, and whom I had to address in French as *Sire!* In point of fact I never did so, for my well-rehearsed meeting with him never materialised. But I had read a lot of stories about Hungarian heroes who fought the Turks and in my first Latin lesson I learnt that the Greeks were a very great people. I could not make head or tail of a situation in which the Turks were our friends while King Ferdinand, the Greeks and the Serbs and King Nikita (looking like a Goliath in his photographs) were our enemies.

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[26] Mt 24:34.

In any case, we spent our holidays that summer in 1912 in Dalmatia, on the frontier of Montenegro. I already knew a lot of stories about Nikita, not particularly pleasant ones, for on the eve of the latest Balkan crisis, official imperial circles in Dalmatia, officers of the Austro–Hungarian Navy and so on, did not like him. Yet a Serb boy called Zorko was Nikita's nephew and Zorko was my friend, as far as this was linguistically possible, for his Italian was too fluent for me and his German too bad, and anyhow my idea of German was that it was only spoken by Vienna aunts, and patriotic Magyar boys should speak it as little as possible.

As to my French which I was supposed to display before King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, I had a French mademoiselle to give me lessons when I was eight or nine years old, but she had to go back to France before the outbreak of the war and of course did not return. On my many questions concerning Napoleon, my father informed me that Napoleon had a little boy who was made honorary colonel of a Hungarian regiment at the age of nineteen. Why and how I did not understand, but all the same I asked whether he was as great a man as his father and the reply was: "No doubt he was a clever boy, at the age of four he was a fluent speaker in French." This was meant to encourage me in my French lessons; I believed for a moment that boys who are fluent speakers in French can become colonels of Hungarian regiments at the age of nineteen, and the prospect appealed to me. I liked the gold and silver braid on the collars of Hungarian colonels some of whom one often saw in those days on the Danube embankment, in the Museum Garden, in the Castle Garden, or even in the somewhat less distinguished City Park.

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[27] King Nicholas I of Montenegro (1841–1921) was first prince, and later (the only) king of his country (1910–1918). After 1918, he was exiled, as Montenegro was merged with Serbia, which then formed Yugoslavia with other countries.

A Hungarian colonel whom I remember well was uncle Elemér Soós of Sóvár, the military historian and professor at the Academia Ludovika. He received a high decoration at the battle of Custozza in 1866 but had to retire from the army with the rank of colonel and never became a general. Various versions circulated as to the reasons for his retirement. Most people believed that it was that Col. Elemér Soós, when on army manoeuvres, had captured an Austrian corps commander and his general staff, to which a young Archduke was attached. After his victory, Col. Soós made a triumphal march through the town (was it at Komárom?) acclaimed by the population, but Vienna resented this Hungarian victory. Nevertheless, at the age of seventy-two, after twenty years in retirement, he volunteered for the war in 1914 and became inspector of the military hospitals in Budapest. He was a handsome old gentleman, popular with the lady friends at my mother's parties. His wife was Baroness Anna Korányi, daughter of the famous professor of medicine.[28] Once we met him during our holiday in Dubrovnik (at that time still called Ragusa). I remember he explained to me the relative strengths and weaknesses of the land and sea powers in a war. These informal lessons in military history received from Uncle Elemér about 1912 allowed me two years later to read the war bulletins with some amount of understanding.

I did not have long to wait before I understood more clearly why, when the Balkan Alliance of King Nikita had begun hostilities against the Turks in 1912, the Danubian countries considered a World War to be likely, if not inevitable. Two years later it broke out, after the tragedies of Sarajevo. Without Sarajevo, it might have broken out later, after the death of Francis Joseph in 1916.

Who, in 1912, could have imagined what the world would look like when I was twenty in 1922? The people who expected war in 1912 still mostly thought that Archduke Francis Ferdinand would be sitting safely on the throne of his ancestors. Many political changes were expected, some hoped for, others feared. But who in 1912 so much as knew the name of Admiral Miklós Horthy, or who could think of a Czechoslovak Republic presided over by Professor Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, whose name some people knew, but whom the Czech nationalists did not consider as one of themselves, and who in 1912 was anything but a republican? Who foresaw that in 1919 there would be a communist regime in Budapest, the first outside Russia? Who foresaw Béla Kun (whose name nobody knew) even as a temporary communist dictator? We had a few eccentric revolutionaries, people who had picked up queer ideas about Marx, or the single tax of Henry George, or the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, if they had lived abroad a few years in Europe or America. They remembered also that Hungary had her own revolutionary traditions from 1848–1849, but nobody dreamed of revolutions as a modern possibility. Who on earth in 1912 could have foretold that in 1922, Miklós Horthy would be a sort of military dictator in Hungary, and that he and his Prime Minister Count István Bethlen[29] (in 1912 known to be ultraconservative) would submit to the National Assembly in Budapest a special anti-Habsburg law, under the pressure of the Little Entente? And who indeed could imagine in 1912 anything under such a name?

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[28] Baron Frigyes Korányi and his son Baron Sándor Korányi (1866–1944) were both internationally renowned professors of medicine. Anna (1864–1947) was a sister of Frigyes, herself one of the first female painters in Hungary. Her husband, Elemér Soós (1844–1929), was a dedicated scholar of Hungarian castles and burghs.

And how could the boy of 1912 ever dream that one Monday in August in the year 1954, the curiosity of the historian would prevail over an enmity of thirty years and more, so that he would go with his wife to have tea with Admiral Horthy and Mme Horthy in their Portuguese exile at their villa in Estoril, and talk amicably about the past?

* * *

My life as a schoolboy at the Royal Széchényi Gymnasium ('Royal' signifying that it was a state school, while 'Independent' schools belonged to the various religious denominations) was naturally a reflection of the national life.[30] The eldest of us, a few years above my Form, in what was called the Eighth or Philosophy class, were called up till 1917–1918 and still had time to be killed on the Austro–Italian battle front. Photographs of the boys killed at the front were framed year by year from 1914 until 1918 and their names were inscribed on a beautiful Honours Board. Up to the autumn of 1915 or so, we keenly discussed their exploits, and for another year enjoyed the stories of these exploits. Afterwards, the boys cared less and less. By the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, many of the boys were antimilitarist, others only knew their parents' stories of shortages and wartime hardships; others again read in the newspaper scandals about black market profiteers and corruption over army contracts (boots and coats of inferior material, etc.) Most of our younger and better masters were called up – one was killed on the Isonzo River on the Italian front in 1916, another became a prisoner of war in Siberia in 1915. Gymnastic lessons ceased, there was no master to teach us. Many of the boys belonged to officers' families, but when a father was killed, the commemoration ceremonies had to be cancelled because there was no heating in the school assembly hall. Added to that, our classes were almost twice as large as they ought to have been. The war conditions brought to the suburbs of Budapest a new population. Their sons and the sons of special engineers and workers on temporary war duty were put in our school. Life brought them problems before they had even left school. At the age of fourteen, they had afternoon jobs, such as playing the piano in suburban cinemas, in order to help a widowed mother who had to live on a weekly 25 crowns [the currency of the time] given by the War Office to soldiers' wives;

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[29] Count István Bethlen (1874–1946) was Prime Minister of Hungary between 1921–1931, responsible for the successful consolidation of post-war Hungary. Though many of his decisions were controversial, especially his ways of securing his party's majority in Parliament, he did introduce considerable social and economic reforms, tried to keep Hungary on the track of peaceful revisionism, and made a pact with Social Democracy. His authority did not vanish after his premiership. He went into hiding under the Nazis, but the Soviets also feared his presence and took him forcibly to Moscow where he, old and sick, perished soon.

[30] Gymnasium has been the highest form of secondary education in Hungary (as in Germany). There was a difference, however, between gymnasiums specialised in natural sciences and mathematics, and those in humanities. Menczer uses the term 'gymnasium' consistently, although its English meaning is different.

others helped by queueing for people. Richer boys, like myself who did not need money, did voluntary work as errand boys for the Red Cross, or at military hospitals. Under such conditions, lessons were not of very great interest to us, we had an early experience of life. Politics and social problems entered our minds earlier than in preceding generations and no wonder. There was no radio yet, but there were many more newspapers and illustrated magazines than there are today, also far more public meetings and a more widespread general agitation. The schools of today in Western Europe do not ignore contemporary problems as deliberately as our schools did in those years, and so our personal reactions to these problems were all the more violent.

Budapest in the evenings of the war years offered a horrid spectacle. Prostitutes were at every corner for soldiers on leave, and boys of fifteen were solicited as well (the older boys boasted about this). Yet the old social conventions were still vigorously enforced by families; boys who had a sister were sent to fetch her from a concert or a theatre, or a friend's house, because no girl under twenty of good family was supposed to be seen alone in the street after 9 PM, whereas in fact it was the boys who were in danger. The streets were dark because of the fuel shortage, but there was no black-out because Tsar Nicholas and Emperor Francis Joseph had a mutual horror of the aerial bombardment of cities, and the Italians had no planes capable of carrying out such raids. These air raids only started in the last phase in 1918, and then only on Austrian towns, because Hungary was still too far away for the primitive planes of those days. The old-fashioned trams were overcrowded. German, Bulgarian and Turkish officers predominated the streets in 1915–1917, then finally came the Russian ex-prisoners of war. We had no more soldiers to guard them in camps. Russia was out of the war, but had no trains to transport them home, even if they had wanted to go back to Bolshevism in Russia. The pay of prisoners of war, fixed at the 1914 rate, was ridiculously inadequate by 1918, and so were other salaries and pay. Deserters, marauding prisoners of war, ex-refugees reluctant to return home, to Galicia, for example, where the war was over – all made the streets and especially the villages unsafe. The old-fashioned Minister of Finance, who still believed in the gold standard, tried to control inflation by stopping the issue of banknotes. Thus, the poverty of all salaried people increased daily as the black market flourished. Drug addiction – morphine and cocaine – spread because honest chemists could no longer provide their customers with drugs which would have been safe if they had been prescribed by a doctor but were poison when sold on the black market. Neither rationing problems, inflationary budgets nor welfare organisations were yet known from experience. All these things were learnt from the misfortunes which befell Central Europe from 1917 onwards.

But let me return to my schooldays. As the masters were taken away from us, the Széchenyi Gymnasium lost its reputation for collecting geniuses on its Staff. Our headmaster, Mózes Gaál [1863–1936], was a Transylvanian novelist, biographer and literary historian. We had for a time Mihály Babits [1883–1941], already famous for the first part of his translation of Dante and for his poetry, though his novels, his *History of European Literature* and his volumes of essays only came later. The bearded mathematician Paul Dienes [1882–1952] ended as a leading British fellow traveller for communism and professor at London University. Another master was László Kőszegi, the translator of Ruskin, Emerson and Walter Pater. He left us to become professor at the Academy of Arts. He gave us free tickets for the first performance of his pretty actress daughter – she was eighteen and we were fourteen or fifteen years old. Another master was a child psychologist Nógrádi whom we detested, not for his Slovak accent which amused us, but because he told us all the time that he could 'see through us'. The funniest eccentric was brother of a well-known painter [László] Kimnach, [1857–1906] whom we nicknamed 'Kimi'. He always kept a handkerchief pressed to his nose, alleging that we would cause his premature death and that he was a martyr to his profession because of all the dust we kicked up at recreation times (in fact he died eventually of tuberculosis). He told us his many ideas for educational reforms, shortness of lessons was one of them and this we welcomed.

We had lessons from 8 AM to 1 PM five days a week including Saturdays and from 8 AM to 12 noon on Thursdays. On Sundays there was mass for the Catholics (a signed statement from the parish priest was required if the boy was unable to attend the school mass); the school service for the Protestant boys was at 9 AM and the Jewish boys had to attend their service at the synagogue on Saturday afternoons. Our afternoons were free, but we had a heavy programme of homework to do, or not, if we chose. We had eight hours of Latin per week for eight years by the way, and the best of us could compose Latin verses by the time we left school.

I was chosen as a good Latin scholar to deliver an oration in Latin for the occasion of the King-Emperor's visit to our school, in the course of which I advised His Majesty to end the war at once and dismiss his prime minister. (I was fourteen years old.) Unfortunately, he was prevented from coming, so I never delivered what would have been my first political speech. But the system was bad. The senior staff were on principle exempt from any obligation to supervise the results of our homework, in the absence of the younger masters on military service. Discipline was bad, with old men brought back from retirement unable to cope with lively boys. School excursions were rare, because of the wartime shortage of personnel on duty at the Royal Palace, the National Museum and the Art Gallery, which in any case were closed in the afternoons, while the Danube steamers to Visegrád and Esztergom were only available from the 1st of May to the 1st of September. As a little schoolboy, I used to find great pleasure in practising skating on the [frozen] lake in the City Park, but later on in the war years, many boys and girls had to give up this recreation. You have to have specially strong shoes for skating, the skates need maintenance, one or two hours of skating made children hungry and the refreshment bar was poorly stocked in the winter of 1916–1917, so that our parents advised us to give up skating, which we did with regret.

Even before the war, and especially during the war years, there was something that had poisoned much of our educational system. The liberal ministers in power during the pre-war years tried to make education democratic. But humanist education – mainly Latin – has always been essentially aristocratic, meant for the political élite, the lawyer class of old Hungary, which for centuries was more or less identical with the landed gentry. This is why our Members of Parliament always made their speeches in the House in Latin until 1830, and hence the easy Hungarian *per tu* form of address between equals – aristocratic equals by definition. The modern subjects such as science, higher mathematics, etc. which they added to the Latin and Greek meant a too ambitious programme for the particular difficulties of those days, and with classes bigger and bigger, boys left school with less and less culture, so that the semi-educated intelligentsia became a national danger. It produced Slovak, Romanian and Serb agitators. Socialists frightened the liberal ministers of education, and clerical demagogues frightened them even more. The unfortunate Jewish boys became through their gymnasium training Zionists or red socialists, to the horror of the well-to-do old Jewish patriciate, who felt themselves to be Hungarians in the liberal tradition. The increased number of Jewish intellectuals caused antisemitism. With the landed gentry mostly ruined by bad administration and the inevitable industrial progress of the country; with the big agrarian estates sold, sub-let, or expropriated because the sugar industry brought more profit in taxes to the government than did wheat; with forest lands expropriated for the timber and paper industry – the last refuge of the landed gentry was the civil service. If too many gymnasium and university-trained young men entered the service, the gentry would have lost their last stronghold. Thus, while the government exhibited enlightened liberal principles in the educational system, they secretly tried to discourage those same principles by making the curriculum uselessly and exaggeratedly difficult, in the worst cases making almost a farce of it through neglect.

More imagination would have been needed to take away the social stigma of a non-Latin education. A non-Latin boy would never have the chance to be called ‘tu’ and by his Christian name by a cabinet minister, and even in old age you only had the privilege of being called ‘dear uncle’ by a young baron with a ‘y’ at the end of his name (‘y’ being considered more aristocratic than an ‘i’ at the end of your name) if you were a Latinist, preferably of the second or third generation. A better developed economic system would have provided fresh outlets for educated men, outside the civil service and banking. A commission in the Army Reserve without ‘voluntary’ cadet school was difficult to obtain, and without Latin school it was difficult before 1914 to get into a reserve (or ‘voluntary’) cadet school anyhow. If the education laws made the gymnasium democratic, which girl of good family would have accepted an invitation to go to the theatre with a National Service man, who had not got the yellow stripe on the cuff of the Reserve Cadet School, which was only available to ex-gymnasium soldiers? Even bank clerks had to have the first four years of Latin lessons, in order to qualify for this reserve cadet school.

So, when war-weariness overtook the country by 1916, not only the charm and the prestige of the old uniform, but also the prestige of practically everything else diminished too. The civil service became a bad career. In the inflation period, older people tried to dissuade young people from studying, and the general discouragement of intellectual concerns began.

Yet with all its faults, the old Hungarian gymnasium was an institution which had its grandeur. Some of its teachers were superior to their colleagues at the university. Many gymnasiums had fine libraries and famous scholars and writers on their staffs. And they were truly democratic in the sense that the son of a count or a prince,[31] driven to school by the family coachman, could sit on the same bench as the son of a little Jewish tailor.

I have already mentioned that one of the famous writers on our staff at school was Mihály Babits [1883–1941], and here I can recount an anecdote concerning him. I used to see him often enough when he was still a Classics master at our school, but he only gave our Form a few lessons when our regular master was ill; Babits was in charge of the Form above mine. In the summer of 1917, I met him on a boat on the Danube. I was on an excursion with some friends to Visegrád and he was coming home from the then-so-fashionable steamer holiday (i.e. Budapest–Passau in six days and back in another six days, with stops for sightseeing at Esztergom, Pressburg [Bratislava, Pozsony], Vienna, the Lower and Upper Austrian abbeys). I have a distant memory that he singled me out from a group of four or five boys and talked to me about Nietzsche's poetry and recited some verses of Nietzsche in his own translation. The reason for this was the presence on board the same steamer of József Migray, the neognostic philosopher and literary critic of the *Népszava*.[32] I asked Babits what he thought of this socialist paper and Migray's very independent (and not particularly Marxist) writing in it on Nietzsche, Ibsen, Strindberg and the other intellectual thrills of the grown-ups of those days. I also asked him about the early Kerensky phase of the Russian revolution (the Bolshevik coup came a few months after this conversation). It seems that Babits found my various questions intelligent and even clever. He walked up and down with me on the steamer between Visegrád and Budapest and explained to me that Nietzsche was in no sense a German nationalist, quite to the contrary, he was a very severe critic of Germanism and of all racial theories. He added, however, that Nietzsche saw the "breaking of the Russians into European culture" as a tremendously important trend of the near future, perhaps a blessing, perhaps a catastrophe. He finished by saying that all civilisations can be broken and dissolved by the barbarians who always assimilate them and then rebuild them. I was, of course, admiring in Babits one of the greatest living Hungarians, and we all felt very honoured that he had so much time for boys of our age (and for me more than for the others.) I did not see him after that until the summer of 1919 during the Béla Kun regime, when he lectured at the university. He had already left our school in 1915 after the notorious attack on him by Jenő Rákosi[33] in the conservative *Budapesti Hírlap,* as a bad influence on boys who were to be good soldiers for their King and country, a story I do not need to tell in full here. Babits's lectures in 1919 were open to the public, so the benches were filled with all classes of people from elderly literary men to schoolboys from the upper forms of the gymnasiums; real university students were virtually in a minority. I remember that Babits openly expressed some disagreement with the official communist philosopher György Lukács in one of his lectures, but as he was a well-known 'progressive name' in Hungary, the communists did not remove him from his chair. On the contrary, they tried to build him up as one of their supporters, in order to impress the socialist and semi-socialist authors abroad, among whom in 1919 were such men as Anatole France, Bernard Shaw and Maxim Gorky.

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[31] Austrian, Hungarian and British titles can be somewhat confusing, as in the former two cases, 'prince' does not refer to a member of the royal family. The Austrian/Hungarian equivalent to a royal prince is Erzherzog/főherceg, translated as Archduke into English.

[32] József Migray (1882–1938) was not only a journalist but later a commissar of the Bolshevik regime, for which he was tried and jailed later; subsequently, he opposed the Social Democrats' politics and came close to the radical right. The Népszava was the organ of the Social Democracy and has remained a major leftist paper up to date.

[33] Jenő Rákosi [1842–1929] was perhaps the most prominent Hungarian nationalist journalist of his age, editing the *Budapesti Hírlap.*

In the end the counter-revolution dismissed him rather stupidly from his University Chair of World Literature. He did not have the prescribed Doctorate of Philosophy for a Hungarian University post, but this could easily have been conferred on him *honoris causa* (with the greater part of his Dante translation behind him, about four volumes of poetry, some fifty major and minor essays published in *Nyugat,* the translation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and I think the first of his novels already written). In France, somebody of his standing and studies in comparative literature would surely have been called to the Collège de France; any English university would have given him a D. Litt. But jealous and mediocre dons at the Faculty were afraid of a brilliant rival and procured his dismissal from the university and the civil service, so that he had a few very hard years until a good marriage with a woman writer, who happened to have some private means, came to his rescue. Later still, he became the director of a literary foundation set up by a millionaire.[34]

Between 1919 and 1922 I saw Babits several times, a former pupil of his, Aladár Komjáthy [1894–1963], the poet and mathematician, being a friend of mine. Aladár acted as part-time secretary to Babits, who every now and then invited a party of young men to the master's flat to talk about literature and sometimes politics, amongst them the poet Lőrinc Szabó [1900–1957], later well-known, the young novelist Béla Zsolt [1895–1949],[35] the art historian Iván Hevesy [1893–1966] and the young dramatist Ödön Palasovszky [1899–1980] and Miklós Makay [1905–1977, Calvinist theologian] being some of the names I remember. Then there was his table at the Café Central. Babits listened more than he talked, except when he delivered monologues on his favourite subjects. He was, on the whole, a shy little fellow, very short-sighted with thick glasses and always locking absent-minded, even when he was listening carefully. I used to be astonished that despite the stupidity and malice with which the counter-revolution had treated him, his views on Horthy and his regime were very moderate and he disliked the communists more than he did them [i.e. the Horthy regime].

When I was at school, András Hevesi, a year my senior, was a great friend of mine. He will reappear in my Paris chapter, but now I want to speak of his father, Sándor Hevesi [1873–1939]. When I was sixteen or so, Sándor Hevesi, Director-General of the National Theatre, often talked to András's friends in his study, and I owe him a great deal, for it was he who first spoke to me of Karl Kraus and revealed to me the importance of English studies and persuaded me to learn English. He was the Hungarian translator of Wilde, Shaw and Chesterton, a fine essayist on English literature, a playwright and the author of *The True Shakespeare,* a classic in Hungarian Shakespeare studies.[36]

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[34] The Baumgarten Foundation's prize (founded by Ferenc Ferdinánd Baumgarten) was the most prestigious and relatively lavish literary stipend between 1929–1949.

[35] Zsolt was more important as a bourgeois radical (neither a social democrat, nor a communist) politician and a journalist.

He was born round about 1870 [1873] and spent his youth in England, where in the 1890s he used to know Wilde, Shaw and Chesterton personally. Almost everything Hungarians knew of these three authors in the 1900s was due to Sándor Hevesi's books. Because of a very ardent defence of Wilde in a preface to his translation of *Dorian Gray,* Hevesi was thought to be a pervert, but I do not believe there was anything in this suggestion. András's mother was a famous beauty, of course, an 'aunt' for us boys,[37] although she was only about thirty-eight and thus not yet old, as I realised much later. András was, in fact, the son of her first marriage and thus Sándor's stepson, but this was supposed to be a secret disclosed only to very intimate friends. Hevesi was the Hungarian propagandist for Chesterton and Belloc and perhaps he thought it incompatible with his Catholic position that the fact of his marriage to a divorced woman should be known. He was more or less the first Hungarian author of the neo-Catholic variety, i.e. a Catholic author with a leftish youth and some flirtations with socialism in his past. The Catholic authors of that generation were otherwise strictly traditional, with barely a pro-Ady taste in poetry, and a nineteenth century academic style.

I met some actors and actresses in the Hevesi's house, including Erzsi Paulay[38] (a pagan courtesan in Hevesi's play St Genesius)[39] who was a very fine beauty. She married an Italian diplomat after the First World War and was ambassadress of Italy in Tokyo, in Berlin and in Paris. During the short-lived Károlyi era, we had our youth meeting on the 15th March, just before the Vyx [Vix] Note crisis which led to the coming to power of Béla Kun.[40] I was sixteen and a half years old at the time. The Committee consisted mostly of students, but there were also some schoolboys of my age on it. My mission was to take Elisa Paulay in a private car to the meeting, where she was to perform for us. (Was it for the 15th March,[41] or was it a commemoration of Ady who had just died a few weeks before?) I can only remember that she recited some poetry of Ady and that she spoke about Ady to me in the car and showed me a signed photo of the poet before we left. At that time, she was in her late thirties and not yet remarried to the Italian diplomat Vittorio Cerruti until later in the same year 1919, or perhaps 1920. On our arrival at the meeting, a whole crowd of pretty girls came to curtsey to their teacher at the School of Dramatic Art. One of the speakers, or possibly the chairman of the meeting, was Rusztem Vámbéry,[42] whom I probably met for the first time on this occasion. I was greatly flattered by my role of helping in and out of the car a lady of that importance, but I never saw her again, except on the stage, if I am right, as Ann in Shaw's *Man and Superman,* performed in Hevesi's translation.

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[36] The book appeared in Hungarian (1919), there is no English edition of it.

[37] Similar to 'uncle', a colloquial polite form of addressing elderly ladies.

[38] Erzsébet Paulay (1886–1959), actress, later wife of Ambassador Vittorio Cerruti, with whom she lived in Rome, Tokyo, Moscow, Berlin, Rio and Paris.

[39] The play's title is *The Emperor and the Comedian* (1919).

[40] Lt Col. Fernand Vix handed over the note of the Entente to President Károlyi in which the Allied Powers demanded the cessation of further territories held by the Hungarian forces to Romania. The bourgeois government rejected this and resigned, giving power to the Social Democrats who joined the Bolsheviks in founding the Bolshevik regime. Hence, the Vix Note was the trigger of the communist takeover.

[41] National day of remembrance of the 1848 revolution.

By 1916–1918, people in Eastern Europe had forgotten what the war was all about. Old prejudices went by the board and so did the genuine values of a few years ago; nobody understood anymore the meaning of words like society, law, morals, in their old sense. Worse was to come when the war was over. There were no more rich people, no more poor people. Conventions were forgotten; most things one had learnt at school or in adult life became total anachronisms. Practically nobody lived anymore on their profession or nominal jobs. Salaries became ridiculously low as inflation grew. People sold their furniture or bought new furniture in order to resell it in a few weeks' time. Within three or four months, a piano could change hands as many times, and so did other objects. Conversations overheard in trains or trams concerned foreign currency, lending money 'out' at 4% or 6% a week. Everybody speculated in commodities rather than in money, such as shoes, clothes, or victuals. Men began to help their wives with the housework or the shopping. Maids could still be found, peasant girls still left their village to take a domestic job in Budapest or in a Vienna family, but many of the better middle class families could no longer afford to have a maid, or they employed one instead of two or three as they had done before 1914. Gentlemen of the 'first category' (i.e. civil servants of councillor's rank, ex-colonels, professors, etc.) and formerly prosperous businessmen of 'highly responsible' positions could be seen queueing in the market with their shopping bags. Everyone was buying and selling, almost nobody was producing; the Allied blockade of Germany and Central Europe left us without raw materials. Money was either lacking for the organisation of production, or else the old commercial companies went to pieces when the Empire was divided up by the Treaties of St Germain and Trianon (the Treaty of Versailles related only to Germany). Nobody cared any more for somehow serious studies; young people were advised to start at once in business. On the other hand, sects, false prophets, literary frauds and mountebanks of every description were all in the vogue.

The cafés were full of businessmen of a new and doubtful kind. When you sat down, you saw lists of figures written in pencil on the marble tops of the tables; the fellows who had been there before you had been doing some chain business or pushing, as the black market was called in those days. For example, A told B that through his connections with C, he might be able to get some pounds of a certain commodity unobtainable on the market, provided that D would persuade E to lend foreign currency (Swiss francs, Dutch florins, Swedish crowns, etc.) at 4%, but F, who was acting as agent, must get his share, so the 4% would have to go up to 6%. The consumer had to pay for the whole chain from A to Z. The six and eight-roomed flats had one heated room only, because coal was not available. People went to the Turkish baths because they could not heat their own bathrooms or could pay for their gas or electricity bills. Smokers bought tobacco leaves, cut them up with a machine bought on the black market and made their cigarettes at home. Soldiers and ex-soldiers sold cigarettes outside railway stations. Demobilisation was over, but you still met officers of the Reserve in shabby uniforms, who could not afford to buy a civilian suit. It was a common experience to meet people in the street – sometimes even a well-dressed man – who asked a schoolboy for a few pennies for their fare, and introduced themselves as employees of a firm which had crashed, or ex-students who had been unable to continue their studies, or demobilised soldiers living on the twenty crowns a month which was all the reward they got for their war medals (the price of a tram way ticket was about two crowns) or refugees from Transylvania, which the Treaties of Trianon had given to Romania. On the Danube embankment on the Buda side, between Old Buda and St Margaret's Island, I remember railway carriages in which refugee families were living in the winter of 1919–1920, washrooms and showers being installed next to the railway line, as in a caravan campsite for motorists today. The shortages were over by 1921, but inflation and other miseries went on until 1924, while deflation was followed by unemployment on a grand scale.

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[42] Rusztem Vámbéry (1872–1949) was a lawyer, son of the orientalist and traveller Ármin Vámbéry, he defended Menczer in his trial: we shall learn more about him.

I remember the coronation of King Charles IV and Queen Zita in 1916. (Few people can remember three coronations, but I can: those of King George VI in London in 1937 and Queen Elizabeth in 1953.) It was a winter morning and we boys from various schools stood in a street going to Buda hill, where only a part of the procession passed. I vaguely recall coaches, horses, military units, lord-lieutenants and peers in their picturesque Magyar robes and bishops. A drive across the city was not usual at Hungarian coronations, as it was in other countries. The King was only seen by his people in Trinity Square before the Mathias Church where he took the oath and when he rode up Coronation Hill to give the four cuts with St Stephen's Sword, towards East, West, North and South, meaning the defence of the land against all enemies, from whichever direction they might come. I saw the royal coach on a funny old-fashioned film. King Charles dismounted after the four cuts with the sword and took the coach to the Palace Garden Gate. Otto sat in the coach with his parents, in the white robes of a Hungarian peer and wore a sword. The King and Queen I had seen in person a few days before, when they arrived at the Western Station from Vienna.

When I was a boy often in 1912, I saw Tisza in his bowler hat and thick glasses, with his stick with the silver handle, which was almost inseparable in those days from an elderly gentleman of distinguished position; his dark coat and tie made him look, on the whole, like a Calvinist clergyman, though his tall figure and fine beard streaked with grey suggested rather a high-ranking civil servant. He used to jump out of his coach in front of the National Casino and go up the steps quickly. My uncle Emil pointed him out to me and told me that he had been advised to move quickly in the streets since he was first shot at in 1912. He was shot at twice more; as everybody knows who still remembers this bygone era, he was murdered in October 1918. I saw Tisza at the Western Railway Station waiting to receive the King and Queen from Vienna, but I did not see him on Coronation Day.

I cannot exactly recollect my feelings at that coronation. I was in the stage of my first revolt, I had my first socialist reading just behind me. Everybody hated the war, and everybody thought – quite wrongly as we know since from documents – that Tisza was at the head of the war party in 1914. His rivals hated him (Gyula Andrássy the Younger, who as a young man had been his closest friend), his subordinates in the state service admired him, his fellow Calvinists and fellow country squires were fond of him; the radical intellectuals and socialists felt a curious mixture of admiration and hatred for him. The young king was popular, as everybody attributed him plans for an early peace. The old resentments of 1849 were completely dead by now. Hungary only went revolutionary, and then very gradually, after March 1917. The Russian Revolution removed – so we thought – the only reason for continuing the war and for Hungary's presence on the German side, and it was only when, despite Russia's fall, that the war went on and on for over twelve months, that people began to talk seriously about revolution. The Russian Revolution greatly appealed to our juvenile imaginations and the official press did its best to popularise there 'men of peace', especially the Bolsheviks, when Kerensky turned out to be loyal to the old alliances of Russia.

But in 1916, when Imperial Russia was still in the field, we knew very little of all this. Charles and Zita were young people of the peace-party, so many young people who were not otherwise very keen on the dynasty felt sympathy for them and saw in them Allies against Tisza and the 'old set' whom we thought to be the war-party.

Then as disillusion grew, there was a silent but growing revolt, the feeling that the whole war had become an anachronism, and the prestige of the state was shaken as it became more and more obvious that the state could not deal with the problems which the war had raised. Things began to look upside down. The official world lost its prestige, the conservative ideals lost their reality, official culture its value, moral discipline its basis. A new class of rich people came into being, who were the most immoral and the least refined elements of the country. The morbid and decadent sensuality of young men who were living from day to day between life and death filled the city with a womanhood which was appalling and disgusting, frightening for a boy of my age who happened to be out in the street after darkness.

Meanwhile a dry and deadly routine of mechanical learning of mostly uninteresting and superfluous things, with no connection whatsoever with the problems which were in our minds and our hearts, was about all the school prepared to give us. The Galilei Club was not a place our school approved of. Catholic and Protestant student organisations had secondary school sections to which we were allowed, and even encouraged to go, but under the pretext that the Galileists were students and not schoolboys, we were forbidden to go to their lectures. The real reason was that the Galileists were 'red' and socialist students. Nevertheless, I went fairly regularly to the Galilei Club which met at No. 2 Anker köz, in a house which is still standing, during the summer of 1917, when the Russian events were the topics of the day. It was there that Tivó [short for Tivadar, see later] Ács and I met Aurel Kolnai [1900–1973, see later], two years my senior (our respective ages: Aurel 17, Tivó 16, myself 15) and many other boys who belonged to other schools than ours. We also paid some visits to the March Club, the more moderate but still leftish student and schoolboy centre; there our friend was Jani [short for János] Vázsonyi, the son of the then Minister of Justice and a well-known barrister and Member of Parliament.[43] Jani wrote poetry, but our views greatly differed; when his father became a minister of King Charles IV, he began to evolve in a firmly official, semi-conservative direction and he disliked [Oszkár] Jászi and the radicals of the Galilei Group, his father's rivals. In 1944, Jani, a barrister and Member of Parliament like his father, was arrested by the Nazis and died in a German concentration camp, some people say in the gas chambers, others say in the typhoid epidemic which other Hungarian anti-Nazi Members of Parliament (Károly Peyer, Károly Rassay, etc.) somehow escaped.[44] Also at the March Club we were friends of Count János Esterházy, a nephew of the then Prime Minister Count Móric; this Jani II, as we called him (Vázsonyi being Jani I) later became a Member of the Prague Parliament, as a representative of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. He was related to such families as La Rochefoucauld and Lévis-Mirepoix, who asked Robert Luc, for some time a French diplomat in Budapest and afterwards in London, to enquire about his forte through the Quai d'Orsay. He died in a Russian prison in 1950 or so, I think.[45] Senseless discipline (inhumanly harsh on the poor and weak, cynically abrogated in cases of revolting corruption by the strong) was the ideal that the representatives of the prevailing order were prepared to defend. Somehow, we felt that Charles and Zita were better people than those over whom they were supposed to reign, and as we now know, we were not so wrong. Perhaps our mistake was our prejudice against Tisza. For documents I have seen since have convinced me that he too was a better man than those who were his supporters and followers. The great error of our revolutionary feelings was that we delighted in the struggle against those symbolical and visible things which were the throne, the altar, the state and the army. All these were infinitely less corrupt and less rotten than the invisible or less symbolical things, the anonymous profiteers, the business world, the press, the empty brains and dry hearts of a world turning cynical and self-centred; of a world trying to survive its victims, who were the soldiers sacrificed daily by the incompetence and the unimaginative stupidity of those who knew no other answer to, and no way out of, the problems of the modern world than an imitation of bygone wars, than a war killing without cause (i.e. without true hatred, or true belief) in a senseless and mechanical way.

As I think of the first coronation which I remember, I cannot help feeling that those were indeed the *Last Days of Mankind* of Karl Kraus [an expressionist drama], of which I remain until the end of my own last days an ever-meditating witness.

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[43] Vilmos Vázsonyi (1868–1926) and his son, János Vázsonyi (1900–1945) were both liberal democratic politicians, rejected Bolshevism, and Vilmos endorsed legitimism (the view that Hungary's legitimate political authority is the king-in-exile, whose rule should be restored).

[44] János Vázsonyi died in Hannover in 1945, unable to recover from his illness he contracted in Dachau.

[45] János Esterházy was arrested in 1945 and taken to Moscow. He was jailed in the Lubyanka Prison and then on the Gulag until 1949 when he was extradited to the Czechoslovak authorities and died a prisoner in Mírov, Czechoslovakia, in 1957.

Chapter 3

The Revolutionary Mystique of My Youth

Before I describe the revolutionary mystique of my youth, I must sum up briefly the political atmosphere of those days.

Two great lies killed poor Hungary, poisoned the Hungarian mind and moral sense, involving the word ‘betrayal’, the first following the Hungarian War of Independence against Austria of 1848–1849, the second following the tragedy of our defeat by the Allies in 1918. For half a century, ‘they’ – that is, the Establishment of the time made a national idol out of Kossuth. They were so absurd as to tell us that in 1849 the Hungarians were only conquered by the intervention of Russia, and General Görgey’s ‘betrayal’.[46] The fact is that without Kossuth’s impulsiveness and demagogy, there would have been no war of 1848–1849 at all. If he had clearly and unreservedly recognised the common interests of the various states of Greater Austria (or whatever other name that Monarchy might be given) and disowned terrorist crimes such as the murders of General Count Latour, Minister of War of the Imperial Government and General Count Franz Lamberg, sent by the Vienna Government to Hungary as a mediator in the conflict between the Croats and the Hungarians, the war might have been avoided altogether. If there was no possibility of avoiding a confrontation with an imperial expeditionary force, at least Kossuth should have kept to the Constitution on which the Army had taken its oath. The Resolution of April 14th 1849 (i.e. the declaration of the Hungarian Rump Parliament set up in Debrecen, which broke with the Austrian dynasty and declared the Hungarian throne vacant) was a piece of folly which made the Army into a rebel force – and this, without the consent of the Army leaders. Naturally 20,000 Russian troops out of 180,000 soldiers under Haynau’s command did not decide the war.[47] The value of General Görgey’s orderly, disciplined and honourable surrender was spoiled by Kossuth’s flight to Transylvania and the melodramatic burying of the Sacred Crown of St Stephen. It followed that the Austrian and Russian commanders thought that the surrender was nothing more than a tactical step to win time and start a new resistance in Transylvania. This is why the unfortunate companions of General Görgey were court-martialled.[48] Kossuth was entitled to personal safety in England and to some sympathy in misfortune. But the uncritical glorification of Kossuth was a lie which killed the critical sense of some people and put the national conscience to sleep.

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[46] From 1848 onwards, Artúr *Görgei* used his name in this form consistently, instead of the nobility-signifying version *(Görgey)*. Menczer insists on the latter version, this was left uncorrected. Görgei had an unusually long life, (1818–1916) despite the serious skull wound he suffered in a battle in 1849. Arguably, he was a highly talented general, though due to Kossuth’s unfounded charges, the popular opinion was for a long time of him very unfavourable.

[47] Menczer grossly underestimates the size of the Russian army: 200,000 is closer to reality. What is true, however, is that the Hungarian Army was decisively defeated by the Austrian troops at the Battle of Temesvár (Timişoara), under the command of Haynau – Menczer refers perhaps to this battle rather than to the war.

[48] And executed in the city of Arad, on 6 October 1849. Undoubtedly an act of vengeance, it had disastrous political consequences, as it blocked serious emotional reconciliation between the Hungarian public with the dynasty (which never resented this act publicly, either).

When we finally began to see events more clearly, an immeasurably greater misfortune befell Eastern Europe, Hungary, and the whole world. It was the tragedy of 1918–1919. This time 'they' tried to avoid the truth by the same method. They told us that everything was in a perfect state, they suppressed the truth on grave errors and neglects which had been perpetuated by two generations; they did not even care to analyse with any amount of serious mental effort the crisis of July 1914 – the Sarajevo murders – on which volumes were written in other countries. They simply told us that invincible Hungary had been conquered by Károlyi's 'betrayal'. Count Mihály Károlyi was the leader of the Independence Party. He became Prime Minister on our defeat in October 1918 and was overthrown by the communist coup of Béla Kun in March 1919. This was not a 'betrayal', it was a yielding to a *force majeure* of circumstances, in order to avoid a civil war.

Far from thinking the war of 1914–1918 to be a struggle for the right cause – the survival of their country – they only thought, in their stupid and unscrupulous way, that they could get out of any responsibility for the war and the defeat. Other countries produced more wicked people than we did after 1848 and 1919, but no country was richer than Hungary in irresponsible and unscrupulous people who, after each disaster, could go on as if nothing had happened, and explain away all the facts with puerile distortions. If I have devoted so many hours and years to historical writing on just a few events, I did so because the spirit of those years is a true nightmare to me. It was only incidentally that I defended this or that person or party; what I was after, and still am, was conscience and a sense of responsibility. Towards the bourgeois world of the years following the defeat of Austria–Hungary in 1918, our whole circle of student revolutionaries was equally hostile, but within this circle I was as independent as I could possibly be, a revolutionary socialist in my own way, but never a communist. We met almost every week for two years (1919–1921) and sometimes more often. At that age, every acquaintance is fairly intimate and between the age of eighteen ad twenty people easily become close friends, because there is little room in their lives for those sordid little interests which separate men and keep them in a relation of conventional coolness. They care only for those vast problems, great enthusiasms and dramatic devotions which are able to make friends or enemies of men.

We were right, I still feel today, in some if not most of our negations, we were wrong in most, if not all of our positive aims. The world of our first experiences was on the way to its doom and we felt it. That world had high and noble ideals, but it was unable to live up to them. Monarchy, Church, nobility, classical culture and all the rest had become more or less empty forms, meaningless conventions; when they collapsed, they found few, if any, defenders. We went through a war which nobody had really wanted and yet there had been nobody to prevent it or conclude it before it was too late. There had been a struggle between Monarchy and Democracy, but the winner was the driest of bureaucracies and the driest of philistines, neither the Monarch nor the genuine democrats.

Coming from a patrician background, why did I side with the working class? It was for the sake of Liberty, and also for cultural reasons that we shared their aims of Equality.

We thought that, whether we liked it or not, monarchies and aristocracies had ceased to be formative influences of the present; that the bourgeoisie was vitiated, from the very beginning of its ascendancy in the last century, by its insistence that economic interests must take precedence over political and ethical aims and community spirit; that intellectuals, revolutionaries like Mazzini and Herzen, had failed to create a real intellectual and moral leadership for the nations; that Christianity had consented too easily to being a mere survival and that with a few – almost exclusively Catholic – exceptions, Christians were on a hopeless defensive against the new currents, unable to envisage a positive contribution to the needs of the time.

The influence of [the playwright August] Strindberg on me in those days was decisive. When I was in Uppsala in Sweden in 1956, I saw many volumes of Strindberg in the bookshops; I never thought that one day I would see them in the town of whose existence I first learn through him. When I was fifteen to seventeen years old, his *Historical Miniatures,* translated into Hungarian, and the first two volumes of his autobiography were my favourite books and I much enjoyed also his *Gustavus Adolphus* and *The Nightingale of Wittenberg,* all these in German translation. Among young men of my day, the mood was biological, psychological and economic; Strindberg was the one author appreciated by young revolutionaries. I liked him because he had no contempt for history, but on the contrary, his history was the highest art and a source of much wisdom. So, it was through him that I began to see that the true social problem is one of the rightful hierarchical values, and that it is not simply a problem of the rich and the poor. It was Strindberg who made me understand the peasantry; although I was a rebel and a Socialist, I had begun to feel that industrial society would be a socialist state slavery and that the real problem concerns personal rights and human dignity. Property is a way to it and therefore the communist case against property is ultimately a case against rights and human dignity. If it had not been for the counter-revolution and for fascism in the 1920s, I might have become a conservative, favouring agrarian reform under the influence of Strindberg, instead of which I became a revolutionary individualist with peasant sympathies. I also found that Strindberg's arguments for Christianity are infinitely more intelligent than those of the official Protestants, while the case against Christianity which he put forward in his earlier years was more intelligent than that of the scientific materialists and atheists. Finally, I found in him the ideal of a moral nobility and elevation, and despite some coarseness and naturalism, I understood that he was neither an immoralist nor an amoralist. What he said was that moral elevation was on a higher plane than the Kantian ethics of duty; that a sort of grandeur and a belief in the *beau geste* rather than in duties makes man, who is born a sinner, a true friend of God; and that it is Grace and not Reason which saves the soul and the world. And last of all, I saw in this artist a great example of incorruptibility. Not only did he refuse to compromise with his world even before his reconciliation with Christianity, but even the coarsest kind of sensuality could not destroy his intellectual preoccupation with the highest concerns, and especially his moral serenity. Some of his ideas are detestable, for example his naturalism in descriptive art, yet I would not like any of his work to have been destroyed, whereas with many great artists, such as Flaubert, I feel that much of their work should not have been written.

Strong as Strindberg's influence was on me as a young man, that does not mean that I had everything in common with him. Fortunately for me, I never had his obstinacy about his ego. I had the political passion, Strindberg never had this. He ended with history, I began with it, without passing through his other interests and obsessions with science. Writing and self-expression were primary considerations for him, for me they were a means of public action. Finally, of course, I never thought myself to be a genius, as he did and certainly was. At the most, my mind was capable of elucidating complex and chaotic questions and was only comfortable trying to understand and interpret existing things, not in inventing imaginary things.

I returned to my youthful enthusiasm for Strindberg in my fifties and in this I show some originality, for I do not think that many people would agree with me that Strindberg was *the* great writer of his century, and that future ages will consider him the equal of the greatest writers who overshadowed all their contemporaries, like Dante or Shakespeare. This rank he will owe to the *Folkung Saga* (about the medieval rulers of Sweden) and the Vasa cycle (on Gustav Vasa, King Eric XIV, Gustav Adolf, Queen Christina, Charles XII and Gustav III.) His autobiography is a commentary on this historical panorama, while his modern drama, the so-called sex-war plays, such as *Miss Julia,* were a preparation for his achievement in *Gustav Vasa* and *Eric XIV,* which are only inferior to the best Shakespeare and superior to the best Schiller.

What was it in socialism which made me a young socialist albeit an unconventional one? There was a phase in the history of socialism when the idea had its mystique, a sort of semi-religious or quasi-religious appeal. In the last century, socialism sounded like a prophecy on some future and better life. Before 1914, the states of Europe still had an outwardly religious character, with the possible exception of the French Third Republic in its later phases, but even in France the militant laicism of the old radicals round about 1905 only made sense because the Catholic context of everything was still taken for granted. In a society in which religion was still not considered a purely private choice, but the essence of the whole social framework and the basis of the whole political order – the Czar, the Emperor of Austria, the Kings of Prussia, Spain and England were all on their thrones as supreme defenders of the national variety of the Christian religion – even the revolutionary movement grew because of its religious character. Its principal claim was that it would make religion more real (practical Christianity, which would redeem poor people from poverty; a future life that would be a purer and nobler life, but here on earth; belief or faith as the supreme virtue, but in the immediate sense of social and economic transformation, and so on).

By the 1930s, socialism and fellow travelling semi-communism had another sort of mystique. It was the affair of ambitious young intellectuals, the great majority of them of middle class origin, with some sort of intellectual background (they were university lecturers, journalists, writers). This time the participation of the working class in socialism and semi-communism was almost irrelevant. The oldest socialist movement of all – the German one – ceased to exist and did not even produce any noteworthy émigré or exile in the 1930s, as the Italian socialist movement did, for example, with my friend, Carlo Rosselli.[49] The only chance for rebellion for these young intellectuals of bourgeois origin, at least in Western Europe, seemed to lie in the literary, scientific and artistic field, where they could hope to create a new sort of proletariat to replace the old middle class. But this 1930-type of literary socialism was short-lived and ended in failure.

My own generation, which was in its twenties in the 1920s, came between this semi-communism of the 1930s and the old pre-First World War socialist mystique. We still knew the veterans of the old socialism; we still went to meetings which were genuinely working class. We did not believe every word of the socialist classics; we thought Jaurès was shallow, Kautsky of limited intelligence and Sidney and Beatrice Webb of the early Fabians, bores. But with the thoughtless, brutal and empty counter-revolution before our eyes (the secret military leagues in Germany, the stupid sort of nostalgic and reactionary German middle class, the narrow-minded and thoughtless French philistines, the shallow English fellow travellers, the Horthy–Gömbös era in Hungary) we still chose the old socialist vision as being something more profound, more dignified and more serene.

Once upon a time I was a conspirator and was put in prison, but never did I write about it to make literary capital out of it, as so many so-called revolutionaries, have done in the past. I only did so in the 1970s, to help present-day Hungarian scholars in their research work and now in this book.[50] As a revolutionary, I wanted naively, but quite sincerely, to govern a state and perhaps guide a revolution; not in the worst moment of my youthful confusions of my mind did I want to be a ‘literary revolutionary’. I hoped for some political occasion which would dispense me from writing, not for an occasion to write. I studied history, political and social problems, but never books which dealt with the psychology of the author’s ego, which even as a young man I found unreadable.

All I did to be sentenced by the court of the Horthy regime to eighteen months in prison (of which I served ten months from March 1922 to January 1923, before being released on bail and put under police supervision) was to organise clandestine lectures with fellow students in various groups on topics such as Hegel, the evolution of modern Europe in a democratic and socialist sense, the general philosophy of history and so on – contrary to the police regulations forbidding political meetings in public unless police permission had been previously obtained and a police officer was present. One of my lecture series in 1921 was *The Evolution of Europe.* In fact, this was a long discussion between György Markos[51] and myself on the Spengler theory of the *Decadence of the West* [The Decline of the West]. It was indeed the problem which occupied our minds at the age of 18 and 19. György kept some notes of my lectures and of his own contributions to the discussions. The Police Archives contain other fragments, our secret news-sheets, etc., but the prosecution could not make head or tail of this. I also distributed money I was given to help the families of men and women serving savage sentences in prison for distributing socialist pamphlets; one girl student, Erzsébet Andics,[52] a friend of ours, was given fifteen years hard labour at the age of eighteen for just such a crime.

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[49] Carlo Rosselli (1899–1937) was an Italian liberal-socialist politician. He fought in the Spanish Civil War and was murdered in France where he had been living in exile.

[50] One of the few places where Menczer alludes to the motives of writing this autobiography, see the Introduction.

[51] György Markos (1902–1976) belonged to the radical youth, like Menczer, suffering a short imprisonment. He went to Berlin and Paris, also worked as a graphic designer, and became a scholar of economic geography. After his return to Hungary in 1940 he managed to survive the Nazi terror, and joined the communist regime, working in various positions, but becoming a critic of the regime in 1956. After that he worked only as a scholar.

The scholars now doing research in Hungary on our Period (a symposium called *The Progressive Youth Movements 1918–1945* was published in Budapest in 1978) have had access to these police archives.[53] What blighted my young life in 1922 may make the reader smile today. I was singled out by the public prosecutor, the records relate, as having “a higher-than-average intelligence and an unusually wide culture for my age”, and therefore the state and society were in greater danger when such young men as myself were preparing a revolution. They also make clear that independence of position which I have kept throughout my life, for the police archives reveal something that I learnt for the first time in Budapest in 1972, that when Ernő Gerő[54] was interrogated, he said that our group was too divided in its views, and that I myself represented an independent influence which was hostile to communism; thus I was not ‘good material’ for recruitment to the Communist Party.

My subsequent trials were in absentia, for writing articles in the foreign press attacking the Horthy regime. For example, when General Gyula Gömbös, Horthy’s Prime Minister from 1932 to 1936, and the man whom some of us considered to be the evil genius behind Horthy, made an official visit to Rome to see Mussolini, I wrote in *Die Weltbühne* of Berlin in 1932 that “Gyula had gone to see Caesar”.[55] For such things I was tried in contumacy, but these trials ended without a sentence. The eminent penal lawyer, Rusztem Vámbéry appearing as defence counsel in political trials, argued that trials in the absence of the accused person were contrary to Hungarian law. Our Penal Code of 1878 expressly stated that every judicial proceeding must be terminated if the accused person dies or becomes unfit to stand trial. Thus, a Hungarian Court could not ascertain whether a person living abroad was alive and normal.

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[52] Erzsébet Andics (1902–1986), the wife of Andor Berei, became an influential cadre in the Rákosi regime and a less prominent but still leading historian in the subsequent Kádár regime as a representative of the Marxist–Leninist interpretation of Hungarian history.

[53] The full title was *A Haladó egyetemi ifjúság mozgalmai Magyarországon, 1918–1945* [Movements of the Progressive University Youth in Hungary 1918–1945], edited by Henrik Vass and Ágnes Szabó. Budapest: Kossuth, 1978.

[54] Ernő Gerő (1898–1980), member of the communist movement, fought in the Spanish Civil War, infamous for his ruthlessness and intransigent Stalinism, became a leading figure of the Rákosi regime, for a short time he was Rákosi’s successor and a widely hated figure in Hungary. Kádár had him excluded from the Party for good.

[55] Gyula Gömbös (1886–1936) was in many respects similar to many other (proto)-authoritarian leaders throughout Europe, such as Primo de Rivera, and later Benito Mussolini; promoting a radical rightist modernisation. Admiral Horthy, the governor, was in Gömbös’s case a powerful counterweight. Gömbös died while in office, though by that time his program had already failed.

Our lecturing programme of the Group MMIS (Markos, Menczer, Illyés, Szegi) found by Andor Ladányi[56] in the Police Archives (a copy of which I saw in Budapest in 1972 and 1975 proves that György Markos and myself mainly discussed Spengler, Burckhardt and Nietzsche more than we did Marx. It also proves that Gyula Illyés was more interested in contemporary poetry than in sociology, and that Darwinism and Freudian psychoanalysis – the favourite themes of the Galilei generation (that is to say the Hungarian radicals who were our seniors by twelve to fifteen years) – had little impact on our minds. Many years later, Illyés told me that he never cared much for Marx, his favourite social thinker was Proudhon, with his formula, "la propriété c'est du vol", [all property is theft] because as he explained, this sounds very paradoxical and absurd, but is actually a modern expression of a philosophy which the Greeks expressed in the myth of Prometheus. Man steals the divine fire, in other words, the art of using the forces of nature for his own benefit. Likewise, the various nations conquered the land on which they have lived ever since and which throughout the centuries they have organised as their property, refusing to cede it to any other nation. Conquest is therefore another name for theft. Perhaps this is the inspiration behind the best of Illyés's literary work, his novels and poetry on peasant life.

In September 1972, Andor Ladányi came to see us in my nephew's house. A young man who made a very good impression on me. He gave me the typescript of his chapter dealing with our trial in December 1922, and also some copies of the police and court files and asked me for a few more precisions concerning the comments made by György Markos on his typescript. Only one thing turned up which was new to me, the police report on Ernő Gerő in October 1922 and used by the prosecution in his trial in May or June 1923. Gerő was arrested six or seven months after us. According to the document, he was interrogated concerning his relation to me; he said something to the effect that he found us much too young and not serious enough, and especially with me he was unable to have any success. He had had several conversations with me, he said, but I only asked him questions on the non-communist émigré activities in Vienna and was not interested in the Communist Party. He got the impression that I would never become a Communist Party member, though at first, he had hoped to influence the young people close to me through me. I did not know anything of this police report, although at the time of Gerő's trial, I was still in Hungary. His trial ended with Gerő, and one or two others of his group being sent to Russia, in exchange for a last group of prisoners of war who had been detained there as hostages. Apparently, my name was mentioned in the trial, but I did not know of this, or if I read it in a newspaper reporting the trial, I had forgotten this detail in the last forty-nine years.

The main interest in the Gerő trial concerned Colonel Aurel Stromfeld. As is still remembered, he was Chief of the General Staff of the Hungarian Red Army from March to July 1919. He was one of those officers of the old Royal Honvéd forces who did not mind fighting the Czechs and the Romanians, not even under the red flag. He was imprisoned after Béla Kun's fall, court-martialled, and condemned to three years in prison, but he was released at Christmas 1921 in a partial amnesty. He took a job in civilian life and joined the Social Democrats. Shortly afterwards, in the spring of 1922, Gerő went to see him and gave him some hints that there were "some young people" (was that us?) in the socialist movement who would readily accept Colonel Stromfeld, whom they considered to be a patriot, as the leader of the left wing of the party. Colonel Stromfeld's reply was a categorical "no" to Gerő, and to any cooperation with the communists. After his second trial in 1923, the Colonel was released after his acquittal, and he died in 1927 at the early age of 49. Between 1925 and 1927, he did some writing on peace and disarmament in books and pamphlets. A faction of the Social Democrats considered him to be their leader.

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[56] Andor Ladányi (1928–2021), historian.

While I was still in prison, the elections of 1922 took place; despite violence in the streets, interference by the gendarmerie who forbade meetings and deported some candidates from their constituencies, and some acts of terrorism by the Gömbös military leagues, they showed that the counter-revolution was beginning to come to an end. The liberal democrat opposition was strengthened, the socialists gained 27 seats. Since the *débâcle* of the attempted restoration at Budaörs in October 1921,[57] the whole structure of the regime began to collapse. The more intelligent and decent people of the counter-revolution wanted the King to return. After Horthy's admission that a restoration of the Monarchy was impossible because of the international situation, the regime had lost its *raison d'être.* Until that point, people had accepted the military leagues (for better or for worse), the Horthy officers, the nationalist ballyhoo – much was tolerated and even excused, as long as Horthy was considered a kingmaker, a restorer of the good old days and of order. We all thought – I did too – that after the failure of a restoration, the only way let open to Hungary was to become a republic, more or less on the Austrian model, with a Christian Social or Social Democrat party, with in addition perhaps a Protestant Peasant Union, or Smallholders Party, since Hungary, unlike Austria, had a fairly compact Protestant region in the East.

The military style of the Gömbös leagues, the boastful irredenta speeches, the silly youth leagues, made no sense anymore. Hungary began to realise that not an inch of lost Hungarian territory had been returned through the grandiloquence of these 'patriots', by the pompous exhibition of queer out-of-date uniforms, by the foolish talk of a 'pure' Magyar race, which incidentally was advocated for the greater part by such names of German origin as Karl Wolff, and others who are better forgotten.[58] It was obvious enough by 1923 that the counter-revolution would have to be liquidated, perhaps slowly, perhaps more quickly than we hoped. The criminals of the counter-revolution went unpunished, though everybody knew who they were – except the police and the Attorney-General. The 'patriotic murderers', very passive under the Communist regime of Béla Kun in 1919, but very active afterwards in the official reprisals (sometimes, as Ödön Beniczky,[59] the leading Christian Democrat legitimist politician and from 1919–1920 the Minister of the Interior stated in Parliament

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[57] King Charles IV attempted to regain his throne twice. At the second attempt, at Budaörs, some military troops loyal to him engaged in combat with Horthy's troops. Charles wanted to avoid bloodshed, and the Little Entente countries also warned against his return. The King was captured and sent to exile.

[58] It is not clear whom Menczer had on mind, surely not the SS-General Karl Wolff.

[59] See *infra* on him in more detail.

"acting out of patriotic indignation against the gold watch chains in the pockets of company directors of the Mosaic religion")[60] remained at liberty. The official reprisals consisted as well of stupid sentences, iniquities and absurdities (if not of murders like the unofficial ones) which no decent man could approve, although the exchange of political prisoners against Hungarian prisoners of war in Russia and the amnesty of 1921 had already reduced the prison population to a couple of thousands from the 1920 figure of some 50,000. The police were as stupid as they were brutal; one of the few men of intellect and integrity in the ranks of counter-revolution, Dezső Szabó, stated that the police, the civil service and the courts were largely in the hands of the various secret societies and 'patriotic' leagues. It was Dezső Szabó who was sent to prison, not the officials of the secret societies. (Later on, the scandal of the Windischgraetz-forged French 1000 franc banknotes proved that Dezső Szabó had been right.)

As if we had not got enough bandits, adventurers and frauds of our own, Gömbös imported into Hungary the German murderers of the Ministers Erzberger and Rathenau, the German 'patriots' who had forged the French banknotes, the whole pre-Hitler set of German bandits and adventurers who later on were to become Hitler's henchmen, after practising their various arts in Hungary under the protection of General Gömbös – and I am sorry to say also of Tibor Eckhardt, at that time still a friend of Gömbös, although later on his principal and very courageous opponent. (I met him in New York nearly half a century later, as I shall tell, when we talked over all these things of long ago.)[61] The concentration camps of Zalaegerszeg and Hajmáskér still existed in 1922–1923. Albert Apponyi, not at all a revolutionary, but a fervent Catholic conservative and a faithful royalist, stated in Parliament: "I can assure you, gentlemen, that a stay in these camps would turn me into a communist, my background, my education, my life-long loyalties notwithstanding."[62] One financial scandal followed another, each of them showing the loudest advocates of the counter-revolution to be corrupt and fraudulent charlatans.

I hated the lies, the hysteria, the stupid self-justifications of the people in power. I was revolted by their murders, their brutality, their utter corruption, their flippant and haughty cynicism, their servile judiciary, the short-sighted, primitive materialism of the profiteers of a ruined Empire. Since I had seen Gerő and some others shortly before my arrest, and met communist emissaries in prison, I disliked communism very intensely, whereas until then I had thought part of our ways could be common or at least I had felt some solidarity with them when they were persecuted by a common enemy. The party bureaucrats, the professional communists, became a nightmare to me. I was a non-professional of the revolution in those days, just as in later life, adopting a Catholic attitude and Catholic outlook and thought, I could never adopt any official, servile clericalism.

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[60] No source provided by Menczer.

[61] Tibor Eckhardt (1888–1972) was member of Parliament, chairman of various right-radical political formations, but from 1940 on seeking contacts to the Western Powers as a special envoy of Prime Minister Teleki in the United States, from where he never returned to Hungary, becoming a prominent figure of the anti-communist emigration.

[62] No source provided by Menczer.

I might have borne calmly the official police supervision under which I had to live when I was released from prison and perhaps even a few more months in prison every now and then (political suspects used to be arrested again and again under various trivial and silly pretexts), but the whole Hungarian atmosphere was so disgusting for us that many of us fled to join the Károlyi group in Vienna and continue our fight, even if we risked some disappointment abroad, in the free and democratic countries – and they were to be many.

Chapter 4

Prison and My Companions

My cell in October 1922 was on the sixth floor of the Pestvidék Prison [Gyorskocsi Street]. During the morning exercise in the courtyard, one of my companions, Pál Demény,[63] walking next to me, told me the news of the day: Mussolini had been appointed Prime Minister and Italy had a Fascist government. (Our information was incomplete; we did not know that Mussolini's first government in 1922 still had some coalition partners and some non-political technicians among its members.) Newspapers were forbidden in prison, but all the same, some were smuggled in. Before that, we learned in the same way of Mustapha Kemal's insurrection and his victory over the Greeks in Asia Minor, an event which I discussed with Pál Demény who was my cellmate for a short time. We had to change cells fairly often, we were transferred from one prison to another – I had five cells in ten months. I remember Pestvidék particularly because I was transferred in an old-fashioned, horse-drawn police coach, with no windows, to be sure, but all the same with an opening which allowed me to see life on St Margaret's Bridge and Buda High Street. For over five months I had not seen cabs, cars, trains, or people moving about in streets. It was a disturbing experience. In prison, you are outside time, outside geography and I had a curious satisfaction in feeling that I was outside that particular Hungarian world of the early 1920s which I did not like (not being very sure anymore that the world outside Hungary was much better, or that 'our' revolutionary remedies would much improve it).

We saw our companion prisoners on Sundays, when from 9 AM to 12 noon we were accompanied downstairs to the hall where visitors from outside were received. We were only to converse with the person specified on the written permit, although some of the prison officers who accompanied us cared even less for the regulations than we did. Some of them were good-natured fellows, others went so far as to sympathise with our ideas and whispered to us that they had voted Social Democrat in the elections of 1922. Others we were able to bribe by inviting them to share the food our families brought us, contrary to regulations, but nobody cared too much. Finally, there were even prison officers whose snobbery was flattered by their acquaintance with the celebrities inside.

Just a year before we 'lived' on the sixth floor of Pestvidék Prison, in October 1921, some Knights of the Golden Fleece, Imperial and Royal Privy Councillors and Chamberlains had been living there – for their devotion to the Crown, to the House of Austria, for their devotion to the last King of Hungary to wear the Crown of St Stephen.

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[63] Pál Demény (1901–1991) lived through the twentieth century, was jailed during the Horthy regime as well as the Rákosi regime (as he was a 'Hungarian' rather than Moscovite communist), silenced during the Kádár regime, emerging as an MP of the democratic Parliament in 1990. He also published his memoirs.

In Cell II 28 in the Markó Prison, László Fényes,[64] MP and a sort of Calvinist saint, had spent a long time from 1919 to 1920, absurdly implicated in the trial of the (alleged) murderers of the former Prime Minister István Tisza; the real murderers were never brought to justice, by an incredibly diabolical machination. Only Fényes and some other people were indicted. After our time, our cell was inhabited, in 1923, by Colonel Stromfeld, referred to in the previous chapter. He would have been a national hero in any reasonable nation, but in the early Horthy–Gömbös era, he was put in prison two or three times simply because the police chiefs and state attorneys stupidly tried to save their own jobs in a greatly diminished Hungary by being overzealous. Then later on, in January 1926, Prince Lajos Windischgraetz succeeded Ödön Beniczky, the quixotic legitimist leader, in our cell. All this was perhaps more stupid and narrow-minded than wicked, including the crime of Windischgraetz, more of a fool than a criminal.[65] If the various groups working abroad (about which I shall speak later) had succeeded in bringing down the Horthy Government after this crowning scandal of the forged 1000 franc banknotes [see on this later], there might have been no Second World War – one of the 'ifs' and 'might have beens' of history.

Inside the Markó and the Pestvidék between 1919 and 1925, the prison officers could meet many people whose names occurred on the front page of newspapers: besides László Fényes, there were Zoltán Szász and Dezső Szabó, distinguished political and literary figures, and even legitimist excellencies, like Count Gyula Andrássy, István Rakovszky, Ödön Beniczky and Gusztáv Gratz. Brutal and silly fellows or idiotic busybodies were never detailed to prison administration. The prison officers were not members of the State Security Investigation Section of the police, whose career depended on the 'conspiracies' they were discovering. This police section came to an end in 1926. Its Captain-in-Chief was Imre Nádosy, who came to a sad end. He was not only dismissed, but arrested in January 1926, in order to satisfy the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand. A strongly worded French diplomatic note was handed over to Budapest, containing irrefutable proofs that Nádosy (until then a favourite of the Regency Court of Horthy) was a member of the secret military league based in Germany, which was responsible for the forgery of the franc banknotes and that Nádosy knowingly and deliberately provided the agents who tried to distribute the forged banknotes in Holland with diplomatic passports and officially sealed diplomatic bags.

The old Markó Prison cells had asphalt floors. The Pestvidéki was then brandnew. On account of the celebrities who inhabited the famous sixth floor, the warders treated it as a sort of Prison Museum, especially since the legitimist Excellencies had been there.

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[64] László Fényes (1871–1844) was anti-communist social democrat. As a journalist, he was a relentless and fearless investigator of political crimes. After 1934, he left Vienna, went to Paris and landed later in New York, being supported by Oszkár Jászi.

[65] Prince Lajos Windischgraetz (spelled sometimes Windisch-Graetz, 1882–1968) served as a diplomat and minister before the war, implicated in a corruption affair (earning him the moniker 'Potato Prince'), in emigration during the revolution. He returned as a legitimist politician to Hungary and testified against Mihály Károlyi in his trial *(in absentia).* Sentenced to four years in jail in the forgery trial, he spent two years there. He became an agent of the Gestapo and escaped to Argentina, but later returned to Europe.

Gyula Andrássy left a portable rubber bath in one of the cells for the benefit of the next inhabitant and which, it was said, the warder put back in the cell if he was offered a good tip. I never tried out whether this was true. I had the good luck to arrive on a day when the doctor was in a good mood, and he gave me – and three other sixth-floor gentlemen as the inhabitants of the political section were called by the proletariat of the lower floors – a permit for the daily use of the shower.

Another funny story concerns Zoltán Szász, the radical journalist, playwright and poet. When he was told that he was released in January 1922, he "asked permission to stay one more day". He had accumulated a library in his cell, and he wrote a great deal every day, so that he had manuscripts of about 100,000 words at the end of his six months at the Markó. "You do not expect me to pack all this in five minutes, do you?" he asked the warder, who replied: "I am sorry, Sir, you are released and although this court order is 'conditional' (meaning that the released prisoner had to stay in Budapest until the day of his public trial), I have not got the power to keep you here, not even on your own request. Unless I bring you down to the office at once and the office sends you out into the street, I am risking my job." Zoltán Szász felt very kind and human in saving the warder's job and possibly a family from unemployment and packed his luggage quickly with the help of two other prisoners whom the warder called in from the cells opposite and who took some souvenirs while packing. Eventually he left with a case much lighter than he expected: a fact not entirely due to his literary fame. His manuscripts were intact, his clothes, shoes and shirts less so. He had been sent to prison for two years for writing in a Vienna émigré paper that Hungary was in the hands of various secret leagues and societies, the court not admitting any evidence to prove his allegations. Imagine if you can Zoltán Szász, complete with monocle, making French 'r's and dropping his 'h's in the manner which was so frightfully aristocratic in old Budapest, speaking in a high-pitched voice.

One story I heard about László Fényes, a well-known journalist and Member of Parliament of independent views. A solid police cordon was thrown round the Markó on the night when he was released, lest some young people and active Socialists should give him an ovation. Indeed, there were people standing about waiting to see him, including press photographers, whom the police chased away. Finally, Fényes came out (the scars across his face perpetuating the memory of the duels of his youth) accompanied by his defence counsel. A horsecab (this was 1921, almost the premotor age) was waiting for him. The press photographers managed to get near the horse and hide themselves behind it. Fényes began to stroke the horse's head when he noticed the pressmen. "Gentlemen", he said to them, "for two years in prison I have not seen a single horse, this is the first one I meet. I have seen more journalists than I wanted, even in this building."

Most of the prison celebrities of those days are now dead. Péter Ágoston's last illness and funeral in the Père Lachaise in Paris is a sad memory;[66] Fényes died in exile in New York towards the end of the Second World War. Zoltán Szász died at home, just in time, for shortly after his death the Nazis took Budapest, and at the age of 65 he was not yet obscure enough for them to leave him in peace.

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[66] Péter Ágoston (1874–1925) was a freemason, lawyer and legal scholar, fulfilling various posts in the 1918–1919 cabinets, including the Bolshevik one.

When I was set free at the end of January 1923, I was placed under police surveillance. This meant that I had to be indoors after 8 PM, I was forbidden to frequent public localities of any kind – i.e. forbidden to enter cafés, restaurants, or go to theatres and concert halls – forbidden to use the telephone or send telegrams, obliged to show my correspondence to and from abroad to the police, forbidden to be in the street before 7 AM or after 8 PM, forbidden to take part in "any gathering comprising more than six people". I had to report twice a week at the police barracks in a road just off the Baross Square to have my supervision card stamped twice a week. (As a boy I had to cross this Square regularly to change trams to get to school, yellow trams for even numbers, brown trams for the odd numbers in those days.) The barracks, or police depot, was a prison for people sentenced by a police magistrate to thirty days at the most for offences against police regulations, which were not crimes according to the Penal Code. In the same building, people awaiting transfer to concentration camps were accommodated – by order of the Ministry of the Interior, as the Courts of Law could never give an order of this kind. Foreigners who were to be deported from Hungary were also kept here to await their train. I also had to receive the visit of a police inspector or sergeant "at any time of the day" to ascertain that I was keeping the "regulations". Every now and then a police inspector visited me in my home and took little bribes from my mother – it was inflation time and the poor Horthy police had to live somehow.

Needless to say, nobody placed under such supervision kept them, but as a monument of stupidity, these relations should be recalled. Pál Demény and I, as leaders of revolutionary youth groups – rival groups if you like – had to sign a paper that we would keep these regulations, or appeal to the Minister of Interior against them. I told the Chief Inspector: "I am not going to appeal, but I am simply stating that these regulations are contrary to Hungarian law", since the text of the Peace Treaty had stipulated that within twelve months of the ratification of the Treaty in June 1921, the state of emergency was over, thus making police surveillance illegal after June 1922. Hence, I continued, every policeman who tries to enforce these so-called regulations, commits a grave offence, which the Penal Code calls "misuse of legal power", for which the penalty was up to five years in prison. Pál Demény, instructed by me, spoke in the same way. We were asked once more whether we wished to appeal to the Minister of the Interior. Our reply was that the minister in question is fully aware that these regulations were illegal and that the whole Police Department of Internment and Surveillance had no further basis in law, and we find that a Minister who condones its further existence puts himself outside the law. The chief inspector told me that the Károlyi Government and the Béla Kun Government of 1919, of which we were the partisans had committed graver illegalities. "The difference was", I replied, "that neither Károlyi nor Béla Kun had signed the Peace Treaty, neither did the communists of 1919 claim to be the representatives of Hungarian legality since they openly declared themselves to be a proletarian dictatorship. The present government signed the Peace Treaty and claims to act in the name of Hungarian law". Finally, I said I would sign a paper saying that I would submit to the regulations and would not appeal, because an appeal would mean that I recognised their legality, whereas this I will never do. The police officer, poor fellow, did not dare to put this in writing, and in the end, I signed the paper saying only that I had heard the "regulations" read out to me.

A few months later, internment and police surveillance did in fact come to an end, thanks to the intervention of the British Plenipotentiary in Budapest – moved to do so by Rusztem Vámbéry – who told the Horthy Government that Britain was not prepared to subscribe to the League of Nations loan to Hungary, unless internment camps and other police measures contrary to the Peace Treaty were ended.

Since again and again in my Journals, I have come back to the *Sturm und Drang* period of my youth, I can add some words now about my old companions.

Pál Demény, just mentioned, was my cellmate in three of my prisons. A sort of freelance revolutionary, more of a mild anarchist than a Marxist, he had a genuine love for his companions. One day in the Markó Prison, when I expressed my first doubts as to whether all our activities made any sense beyond our protest against the stupidity and the cruelty of the early years of the Horthy era, he said: "No, I disagree, our movement is not entirely negative, as you see. Look at our boys (i.e. the working class boys we organised into groups). If we had not given them our ideals of a brighter future, our ideals of emancipation and of the dignity of the poor, they would have become thieves and juvenile delinquents. What are criminals, after all? They are stupid egoists, self-seeking men. We gave to these poor boys the ideal of sacrifice, the feeling of community, a hope and a cause. Think of our girls. Some of them would have become tarts, with no other aim then to get jewels and fur coats through blackmailing rich married men, by threatening to send anonymous letters to their wives. What do these girls do instead of that? They help their comrades, they try to understand the world and fight its evils, they are prepared to bear sacrifices with dignity, they do something generous, they visit their comrades in prisons, they have a sense of dignity which they communicate to other people in the poor classes, they enjoy spiritual friendships, they feel a certain nobility in being poor and needy. Believe me, this is what Socialism has really given to the world. Unfortunately, the organised religions do not give this anymore and the national idea no longer teaches them any sense of honour and self-sacrifice."

I think this was the best and most valid defence of socialism I have ever heard and the true statement of our ultimate motives. Pál Demény was the leader of a group of young people independent of our own group, so that I only met him in prison, although I had heard about his activities before that.

Of the now celebrated MMSI group, the most intimate companions of my youth, Gyula Illyés became, as is well known, the leading literary figure of his day. György Markos, after various adventures, returned to Hungary and ultimately became a professor at Eötvös Loránd University and an author. In the last phase of the war, in 1944, he was arrested by the Arrow Cross men,[67] deported to Bavaria, then liberated by the American troops in 1945 and once more returned to Hungary. His book *A vándorló*

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[67] The Arrow Cross Movement was the Hungarian version of Nazism.

fegyház [The Wandering Prison, Budapest, 1971] is a commentary on these adventures. I shall speak more fully on them later.

Pál Szegi is perhaps a forgotten figure today. He published some poetry and a translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova.* He gave some lectures on literary subjects in the course of our secret and semi-secret meetings. One of them was perfectly public in September 1921, when Illyés and Szegi read some of their poetry and we had two musicians to play Bartók and Kodály. Authorisation for this was somehow obtained from the police department 'for the arts' – there was such a thing in those days – not by ourselves, but by the secretary of a club of more or less social democrat character. Later Pál Szegi was a refugee in Paris, where his wife Erzsébet Markos (György's sister) joined him in 1923. He published some essays on films and drama there, then returned to Hungary in the same way that Illyés did, but a year and a half earlier. He had to report to the police for some time, but his trial never came up. Andor Ladányi found the last entry in our police file dated 1937. It concerned the end of any further proceedings against Pál Szegi, who was by that time a travel writer on the daily paper *Pesti Hírlap.* The paper sent him to Athens and Constantinople and the public prosecutor informed the police department which dealt with passports that he would be allowed to travel freely; no further criminal proceedings being pending against him. He produced one or two travel books on the Near East (as it was still called in those days), also book reviews in the *Pesti Hírlap,* but as poet and author he published little until he was rediscovered after the last War, and some of his earlier unpublished work came out in book form. Though he was close friend of Illyés in our time, he was not one of the associates in the movement of the village explorers [sociography writers] in the 1930s. I heard about his death at the age of sixty from György Loránt,[68] one of our younger followers, who wrote to me in 1960 from Paris that he had seen Szegi's obituary in an official paper. I do not know how far his work is remembered today.[69]

According to György Markos, when we met in Budapest in 1972 for the first time since our last days together in Paris in the years 1933 and 1934, Pál Szegi took it for granted that he was a genius (we had both thought him the most outstanding talent amongst us in our youth) and did not bother to produce much more work to prove it. Gyula Illyés, on the other hand, according to György Markos, worked hard and produced a great deal in the dozen years after his return to Hungary, in order to win the appreciation of our circle which was by that time dispersed.

Laci Ney became a good French painter in Paris as Lancelot Ney.[70] I met him in Paris in 1948, then he visited us in our Hampstead home and once or twice more I met him on my Paris trips, and he sent us Christmas and New Year greetings. Then I lost contact with him and his French wife. He was the cousin of György Markos's first wife Zsuzsi Ney and the two men ceased to be friends after György's divorce. Lajos Szabó lived in Brussels and in Düsseldorf, where I saw him in 1964.[71] He was an abstract painter and painter-philosopher as he called himself in his essays in German reviews. Laci Koczóh[72] died in a Budapest asylum, incurably mad, round about 1930 and his mother asked me in those days to write to him, because in his very rare lucid moments he always asked her for news of me. Mihály Somogyi, the mathematician, wrote to me in 1937 or so, but with the Second World War our correspondence ceased. I heard only much later in 1964 that he had been deported by the Nazis in 1944, survived the Nazi occupation, but died after his return to Hungary from a disease contracted in the concentration camp. Imre Zélinger lived in Paris and worked in a bookshop, and I lost contact with him about 1928.[73]

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[68] No data were available to me about György Loránt other than Menczer's own.

[69] Pál Szegi (1902–1958) was an accomplished literary man, writing some fine poetry and many scholarly papers, an expert on French literature (having lived in Paris and visited the Sorbonne). He returned to Hungary, and his apartment became an important artistic centre. Called to forced labour service on the Soviet front, he survived, and was again a much-sought-for editor after the war, but his 'petty bourgeois' tastes were no longer tolerated after 1953. He died while working on Villon.

[70] Lancelot [László] Ney (1900–1965) was a successful caricaturist, graphic artist, and later painter in Berlin and Paris. He was a popular portraitist but painted abstract themes as well.

In August 1960, a curious letter awaited me on my return from one of my trips abroad. It was from György Loránt, who signed himself "Your old accomplice" and was written from Paris where he had lived from 1957 onwards. He was arrested at the time of the student trials in 1922 at the age of seventeen. I last met him when we were both living under the regime of police supervision, after our release. Most of us had rather a poor opinion of György Loránt, but this was perhaps because he was the youngest among us and he was a rather immature young fellow. One or two years difference in age mean a great deal for boys of about twenty – the oldest of us (Imre Zélinger) was twenty-two or twenty-three and could not forgive me for taking György Loránt seriously as one of 'us'. The main advantage of Loránt was that for some reasons he travelled fairly often between Budapest and Vienna in the years from 1920 to 1922 and thus he could get letters across the frontier to the forbidden émigré press. He was the son of a well-known editor, but his father was no longer alive. In those queer post-war circumstances, Loránt's mother and sister could not get a flat in Budapest and lived part of the year in Austria, while György was either a subtenant or a paying guest in a Budapest family, so that he was therefore less well supervised than a boy of his age would usually have been. So, at the age of seventeen, he was 'conspiring', like many of the good young men in those rather fantastic years of revolutions, counter-revolutions and nightmares; and like the still more numerous bad young men of those years, he was also engaged in speculations against inflation. Somehow, he always had money of his own. He was brought into our company by József Jarnó, a boy of not very attractive character, later the author or two novels, one of which was about 'us'. Jarnó was literary vanity, egotism and ambition incarnate and we did not think that his talent was proportionate to his pretensions, but later he had some success in Slovakia, where he got an editorial job and married into the circle of the leading lights. He died at the age of barely thirty, on a reporting trip to the Middle East. The Budapest paper recording his death said that he had tuberculosis and was expecting an early end. This was probably the explanation of his impatient and unruly temperament.[74]

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[71] Lajos Szabó (1902–1967) was a leftist but later joined the circle of Béla Hamvas, the traditionalist philosopher. He survived Auschwitz. Member of the Budapest Dialogical School, he was immersed in the Scientia Sacra, the Great Tradition of mankind. He emigrated in 1956 and exhibited his meditative calligraphic works in various cities. Besides Menczer himself, Szabó was another exceptional figure of the leftist-radical youth of the 1920s who became conservatives.

[72] No data were available to me about László Koczóh.

[73] No data were available either on Mihály Somogyi or Imre Zélinger.

Somehow the new authorities were informed of the fact that the former Police Chief Hetényi was married to an aunt of his and so he was dispensed from the special supervision regulations, shortly before they came to an end in 1922 or 1924. The last act in our whole story was a judgement in the High Court in 1927, but Loránt had by then served the full year of his sentence, as in the case of a minor, no release on bail could be ordered. When he was interned, he was told that he had 'delivered' his friends to the police in 1922. Of course, to my knowledge, not a word of this is true.

Then in September 1960, in reply to my letter to him, I received a long letter from György Loránt telling me that from 1923 to 1939 he had been an economic and financial journalist and partner in a firm of stockbrokers. He worked afterwards as assistant financial editor in the office of the weekly [in fact, daily] *Magyar Nemzet* and in 1945 new adventures began in his life. He was arrested by the new set in 1945, and in 1956 he went abroad. I learned that Pál Szegi was still working as an art critic and György Markos was still at Eötvös Loránd University. Imre Szántó died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and so did Sanyi Wittmann, deported from France by the Germans.[75] I saw Loránt in Paris in the early 1960s, then lost contact with him.

Andor Berei,[76] whose career is known to all Hungarians, I met in the last summer of the First World War. He, Aurel Kolnai (who took Austrian citizenship in 1920 and remained Austrian until he transferred to Canada at the end of the Second World War, where he became lecturer in philosophy at Laval University, Quebec, then in the last years of his life at Bedford College, London University until his death in 1973), and György Kovács, a member of the Galilei Club, in prison for a short time in 1921, then a doctor of medicine at the Vienna Faculty in 1924 and active as a social democrat politician and author until his death in 1967 or 68, were inseparable trio in those days.[77] In that summer of 1918, I remember Berei gave me a roneographed advertisement of something called The Problem Bureau, signed by him and Aurel Kolnai. "Tell us your problems in philosophy, psychology, social sciences, biology, etc. and within a week we will send you all the possible solutions, with ample bibliographical documentation, etc. etc." I told him that I would solve all my problems on my own, but that I wished the firm Berei–Kolnai–Kovács success. The trio had to go to the recruiting office in the spring, like all the young men born in 1900. György Kovács was found to be too short-sighted, Aurel Kolnai hard of hearing (he had been deaf in one ear since an illness at the age of nine). Berei was called up, but not immediately, and the war came to an end before his training was finished. In fact, very few young men of the class of 1900 went to the front; the shortage of everything was already so bad in 1918 that uniforms, arms for training, food in the barracks could hardly be provided, and even the young men found medically fit for active service were given leave and their call-up delayed.

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[74] József Jarnó (1904–1934), journalist, poet, editor, translator, writer – but also a businessman, died in Lebanon on a business trip.

[75] If Menczer refers to Imre Szántó (1990–1945), then he is referring to the photographer, working mostly and successfully in Berlin who committed suicide. About Sándor Wittmann I was unable to retrieve further information.

[76] Andor Berei (1890–1979), communist politician. After jail in 1922, he was transported to the Soviet Union, surviving the Stalinist purges in Belgium (1934–1946) in the Communist Party there. He returned to Hungary and held various prominent offices under the Rákosi regime, and less prominent ones (mostly academic ones) in the Kádár regime.

[77] No further information could be retrieved about György Kovács.

Finally, the story of my friendship with Tivó [Tivadar] Ács [1901–1974], about whom I have written at great length in my Journals, and who sums up much of the revolutionary fervour of our youth. He was not one of the MMIS group and I forget why he was in prison at the same time that we were. I recall only that he was for some time a cellmate of one of my companions in Pestvidék Prison, of Imre Zélinger (with whom I had little in common, but whose humour and wit we all enjoyed in prison). He told Imre that we were a "queer company". Only I had the honour of being appreciated by Tivó Ács. "I am sure", Tivó added, "that all the others were unable to follow Béla Menczer's thought or understand the motives which drove him into political movements."

I think he was one of the few of my young companions who fulfilled his destiny more or less as he had imagined it as a teenager. He came from a family of Calvinist ministers and if anyone was of 'pure Magyar stock', Tivó certainly was in appearance and in 'blood', deeply rooted as he was, like Csokonai, Endre Ady and Dezső Szabó, in the Eastern Great Plain of Hungary somewhere around Debrecen, in those farms of the Puszta where at mid-day on a very hot summer day, you can see the *fata morgana* and let your fantasy wander. Even in his very young years, he was a hard realist in the sense that he despised every abstraction, while at the same time being an incurable romantic. Every adventure attracted his imagination. Already in our Grammar School days, he wanted to be a globetrotter, and he became one in his twenties and thirties, getting as far as America and even Latin America. He was the most determined individualist I have ever known. He despised all parties and groupings, though he used some of them for his own ends. Although his lifework was devoted to Hungary, he had little in common with any Hungarian nationalist movement but found that Hungary had produced a great number of individual characters, and that somehow history had made the Hungarians a nation of men with great imagination, extraordinary courage, and a sense for great destinies. If any nation other than his was dear to his heart, it was the Serbs, turbulent, freedom-loving and brave as he wanted the Hungarians to be. This pro-Serb sympathy of his began in our schooldays, when Hungarian officers, our seniors by a few years, came home on leave during the First World War, and characterised the Serbs as a savage and rather primitive nation, but very brave in the defence of their native soil – the exact opposite of our pre-1914 bourgeoisie, which was so materialistic in its outlook and intellectually so pretentious.

Tivó and I felt very isolated in the Galilei Club, founded by Karl Polanyi [1886–1964] (whom I first met in Vienna in 1924 and disliked intensely) and we did not like the intellectual fashions of those Hungarian Radicals: psychoanalysis, Herbert Spencer, the German monists, Thomas Huxley. Already in those days, I was reading [James]

Bryce's *The Holy Roman Empire,* the Roman studies of Fustel de Coulanges and of Ferrero, studies by Taine and Carlyle on the French Revolution, rather than Marx, Freud and the Darwinists. Tivó never thought very highly of the lectures delivered at the Galilei Club.

In 1917 he left our school to join the Naval Cadet Corps on a Danube steamer. Thus, he spent the 1ast year of the war on the river, and in the Black Sea, in Serbia and Romania (occupied by our troops until 1918) and in Bulgaria. So, he was our Balkan specialist when be made short appearances in Budapest, and he also wrote to me long letters and called on me each time his ship docked. Between 1919 and 1921 I saw him fairly often, but he did not like my new friends (György Markos, Pál Szegi, etc.) who did not trust him because of his good relations with some dailies and weeklies of a counter-revolutionary character (which in fact puzzled me too, though I kept my old affection for him). What he did was very shrewdly to insert between the lines of his articles for the 'Horthy press' certain ideas of ours. Only one of my new friends shared the views of Tivó and myself and that was Gyula Illyés. The latter's book *The People of the Puszta* on the Hungarian peasantry was not written until ten years later,[78] but I am sure that Illyés was influenced to some extent by conversations he had with me and once or twice with Tivó, whom he met in my company. Tivó's real ambition in life was influence behind the scenes, to take a hand in extraordinary happenings, a sort of Vautrin-like capacity to make extraordinary comebacks. I do not remember anyone who was such a conscious and premature Stendhal or Balzac character already at the age of fifteen or sixteen. He was one year my senior. We edited the school paper together. I first read Stendhal and Balzac in Hungarian translation under Tivó's guidance, and we had long, almost interminable dialogues on Julien Sorel and Eugène de Rastignac. I did not know until he wrote to me, what happened to him in the 1950s and 1960s. If I had asked him, he would probably have replied with the famous answer of the Abbé Sieyès: "J'ai vécu [I survived]." Surviving was always his strongest speciality.

In 1945, Tivó Ács became President in Budapest of the World Federation of Hungarians and I had one or two letters from him about 1967, but when I saw my old friend again in 1972 in Budapest, he was the shadow of the young man I used to know as a witty raconteur and a brilliant causeur, and his death two years later in 1974 must have come as a happy release to him.

When in 1972 I passed the Pestvidék Prison for the first time for half a century, I could not but reflect upon my long, very long way in these last fifty years. Geographically and physically, it was a long journey. From the region of crocodiles, panthers and elephants on the Congo River to the reindeers of the Norwegian fjords and the forests and huge lakes of Canada, from cathedrals to mosques, in cities from Rome to Chicago, from Naples to New York via Berlin, Stockholm, Paris, Brussels, The Hague, Madrid, Lisbon and Tunis, from pre-historic and historic sights, ancient and modern, past and present to the planned future, which is being so much planned that it may never come true. Yet what would all this be without some true spiritual itinerary, without some pilgrim's progress, which hardly needs space or geography? After all, centuries can be concentrated in a very small space, within a very short time.

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[78] First edition: 1936.

Chapter 5

The Men of the Revolution

By 1958, when the Hungarian Section of the BBC approached me for an interview on the events of 1919, I was about the only person left in London, and available, who knew most of the people of 1918–1919.

Leaving the great names of Mihály Károlyi and Jászi to the last part of this Chapter, I knew for years Colonel Béla Linder, Minister of Defence for a short while in the Károlyi Government, Pál Szende, Minister of Finance, József Diner-Dénes,[79] Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (the last two close personal friends of mine), Vilmos Böhm, Minister of Defence, Ernest Garami, Minister of Commerce and Industry. I knew to a lesser degree Count Tivadar Batthyány, Minister of the Interior[80] and belonging to the more conservative wing of Károlyi's party, Márton Lovászy [1864–1927], Minister of Education, Father John Hock, President of the National Council,[81] Vince Nagy, Under-Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office,[82] later Minister of the Interior, Barnabás Buza, Minister of Agriculture,[83] Zsigmond Kunfi, Minister of Social Welfare, Lajos Biró and Lajos Hatvany, both literary men and progressives. I met László Fényes, a former Member of Parliament and Pál Kéri, a well-known journalist, a great many times. Whenever Rusztem Vámbéry, our principal defence counsel at our trials came to Paris or to London in the 1920s and 1930s, I met him. (His son Robert was a theatrical producer for Bert Brecht in Berlin and was also a friend of mine.) This means practically all the memorable figures of the times and many now forgotten. Apart from old Arnold Dániel,[84] Councillor to the Ministry of Agriculture and the expert on agrarian reform, who survived in England until 1967, I had no further contact with many of them after the break-up of the various émigré organisations. To the best of my knowledge, all the ministers of Károlyi and most members of the National Council are dead by now. Some, however, were still alive in 1956: Vince Nagy produced in America a significant comment on the events of 1956 under the title *From October to October,* meaning 1918 and 1956 [in Hungarian only].

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[79] Menczer uses the name Diner and Diener interchangeably; both are correct.

[80] Count Tivadar Batthyány (1859–1931), naval officer and politician, held various cabinet posts in the turbulent months of 1918 but emigrated after the Bolshevik takeover. He was active politically in the Horthy regime.

[81] János Hock (1859–1938) was a progressivist Catholic priest, member of the Parliament before 1918 in various parties. After Károlyi's fall, he emigrated and lived in various countries but returned to Hungary where he was jailed for a year before he was given amnesty.

[82] Vince Nagy (1886–1965) was arrested by the Romanian authorities in 1919. He remained an active liberal politician in the Horthy era, and joined a progressive-centrist Smallholders' Party after 1945, and then served as deputy chairman of the Freedom Party. He left Hungary in 1947 and was active within the emigration in the USA.

[83] Barna Buza (1873–1944) was journalist, member of Parliament, and lawyer. Interned in France in 1914, he was later released, and joined Károlyi's cabinet. He was anti-Bolshevist.

[84] Dániel Arnold (1878–1967), a social democrat journalist, participated in the revolutions and remained an active politician of the emigration.

Colonel Béla Linder [1876–1962] was Minister for War in the Károlyi Government in November 1918 for less than a fortnight. A poor public speaker outwardly, he was nonetheless perfectly qualified for this position. He was a fine soldier in the field, and he had previously held important appointments on the General Staff, which brought him into contact with politics and politicians. As a minister, he proved himself a blunderer and a failure, perhaps because his own military ideals were so wrecked by the catastrophic turn of events that he espoused new ideas with the usual exaggerations found in recent converts. For example, Colonel Linder contrasted the "blind obedience of soldiers of the old army" with the new ideal of "armed citizens in the defence of right and liberty" and hoped to see "citizens in arms and not those blindly obedient soldiers". Some newspapers made a headline out of this: "I do not want to see any more soldiers: Colonel Linder." This silly slogan added much to the general confusion.[85]

Between the two wars, his wife's property being in the Voivodina, he settled in Belgrade, where he opened a bookshop. Then he became a refugee once more in his last years, this time from Tito. He was living in Paris till the 1950s, but I could not find anybody who knew his address.[86]

Pál Szende,[87] barrister, sociologist, economist and originally a radical democrat, joined the Social Democrat Party in exile in Vienna. He lectured at the Collège Libre des Sciences Sociales in Paris and at similar institutions in Germany and died, much too prematurely, in 1934, aged fifty-five, from heart trouble. He, with József Diner-Dénes, will appear more fully in later chapters where I will describe my years in exile in the interwar years. For reasons unknown to me, Pál Szende remained a bachelor. He was a very amusing conversationalist at dinner parties and at our meetings in cafés, smoking cigars because his doctor told him that cigarettes were bad for his health. He was popular with young people, because despite the difference in age, he was interested in them, while his wide-ranging knowledge appealed to them, although I did not think him to be a very profound thinker. Always elegantly dressed, his proper social sphere was the financial world and its drawing rooms in Budapest, but in business matters he was a very strict Puritan and he proved it, when in exile he refused any sort of business job and lived in relative poverty for a man of his former position and experience.

József Diner-Dénes [1857–1937] was, so to say, one of the founding fathers of the Hungarian Labour movement and was certainly one of the first intellectuals to be recognised by the bourgeois world as a scholar who had joined the Social Democrat

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[85] The headline continues to be cited in Hungary as the proof of the Károlyi Government's ineptitude, perhaps deliberate unwillingness, to defend the country against the Czechoslovak–Romanian troops. Of course, such speeches are rarely, if ever, the causes of defeat or indifference, rather, they are symptoms of a general mood, for which historians have assembled ample evidence. Besides, as Menczer in his correspondence surmises, Linder was most probably under the influence of drugs that he, a seriously wounded soldier himself, took regularly as painkillers, which could have contributed to his undeniable failure as Defence Minister.

[86] Linder moved to Yugoslavia where he was honoured and died there.

[87] Pál Szende (1879–1934) was Minister of Finance of the Károlyi Government. He opposed the Bolshevik takeover but remained in emigration (Vienna, Paris), and was later on particularly good terms with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

Party in the 1890s. I met him in Paris in 1925 for the first time and always addressed him as Józsi bácsi [Uncle] and his wife as Emma néni [Aunt] (so did Jászi and Szende, although they were only twenty years his juniors). He spoke a comic sort of Hungarian which was the subject of many jokes in our circle. His wife, who was his cousin, spoke an even funnier Hungarian and when he made a mistake, she corrected him – only to make matters worse. The reason for this was that they were both born in Liptó,[88] where in their childhood the people spoke Slovak, but the intelligentsia spoke German. I mostly spoke to them in German, the language of their education, though their son Pál and their married daughters Zsuzsa and Vera spoke faultless Hungarian, as did their grandson György Vikár, who was born in Hungary, but brought up in Paris and later became a film producer and script writer in France and the United States.[89]

József Diener-Dénes went to a German Gymnasium in Vienna and then studied history of art at the University of Leipzig. He spoke French and Italian; I believe English also. He was widely travelled and told me a lot about England before I knew this country. My friendship with him began when he was in his seventies and ended with his death in 1937, at the age of eighty, although in the last three years of his life I did not meet him personally. In his youth, he was official of the Budapest National Museum under Ferenc Pulszky [1814–1897], Kossuth's companion, who had become the Director upon his return from exile. He also knew Count Tivadar Andrássy [1857–1905], Katinka Károlyi's father (the Royal Superintendent of our National Gallery of the Arts, a great patron of Hungarian painters and sculptors and himself a painter of considerable talent). Thus, I heard many stories of Pulszky and Tivadar Andrássy from him. He also contributed some very fine German essays on Hungarian literature to the Berlin review *Neue Rundschau,* but these I only read much later in London in the British Museum.

It seems to me that in his younger years, József Diner-Dénes was impressed by Nietzsche as well as by Marx, more so by the former than by the latter, although he eventually joined the Socialist movement, which in those days was still very Marxist. In any case, he was a man of fine culture, and his main concern was that the working class should accept the inherited bourgeois culture and improve upon it, following upon the social revolution which he thought to be inevitable and salutary, whether it came sooner or later. It was his studies on the Italian Renaissance which brought him to Burckhardt and to Nietzsche, it was his fine nineteenth-century culture which was the basis of his friendship with Léon Blum [1872–1950] and Alexandre Bracke-Desrousseaux [1861–1955], the intellectual leaders of French socialism at that time.

We, and especially the generation younger than mine, can hardly understand the respect which was shown at the turn of the century for ideas, including ideas opposed to one's own sympathies. For example, I was astonished to hear one day from Léon Blum a highly intelligent analysis of such a 'reactionary' thinker as Joseph de Maistre. In this connection also, I recall a particular conversation I had with József Diener-Dénes in 1933. I was freshly arrived from Berlin and paid a visit to the office of *Le Populaire,* Léon Blum's paper, where as well as Diner-Dénes there were present Bracke-Desrousseaux, Jean Longuet [1876–1938], Marx's grandson and for a short while Léon Blum himself (whom I had known since 1925, but who had little time to spare for me or for anyone else, since he was a busy Member of Parliament and the chief editor of a daily newspaper). I tried to explain the Hitler phenomenon in Germany. József Diner-Dénes exclaimed: "All that you say may be true, but I still do not understand one thing: how could the Germans accept Nazi brutes to lead them? I never liked Prussia, I disliked Bismarck when I was young, and Germany was still dominated by him. But whatever else Bismarck was, he was man of intellect and culture…"

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[88] Liptó County is today part of Slovakia.

[89] No information could be retrieved about György Vikár.

In April 1919, in the early days of Béla Kun, some comrades rang József Diner-Dénes's doorbell. They told him they had come as the delegates of the local Soviet to requisition bourgeois flats. "I am not a bourgeois!" exclaimed Józsi bácsi [Uncle Józsi-József]. "Who is not a bourgeois if not someone who has a big flat like this one in the Lipótváros?" (a snobbish residential quarter of Budapest in those days, where the banks and big firms were.) Józsi bácsi in his funny Hungarian: "You saw my name on the door, József Diner-Dénes. If you do not know my name, you are neither communists nor socialists, you are scoundrels. Anybody connected with the Labour movement knows my name!" At that moment, by a coincidence, Vilmos Böhm, the Social Democrat Commissar for Defence arrived. Seeing with what respect the Commissar of the Red Army treated Uncle Józsi and Aunt Emma as old friends, the Soviet delegates went away with apologies and without requisitioning anything.

József Diner-Dénes was in his younger years a friend of my uncle Laci Berényi. He was in the 1880s and 1890s one of the principal propagandists for the fashionable Nordic authors, Ibsen, Strindberg and Björnson in the Berlin *Neue Rundschau* and in the Vienna and Budapest reviews and weeklies. Ibsen, Strindberg and the Nordic authors generally, as well as the Russian novelists, owed their European success to the German-reading public, and to a great extent to the Vienna stage, which was at its best between 1870 and 1900. All of them, Ibsen, Strindberg, Turgenev, Tolstoy, tried to conquer the French public also and find French critics to engage in propaganda for them, French producers and actors for their plays, but it was only the French actor-producer Antoine who had any success, and then a mediocre one with his Nordic authors. My uncle by marriage, Laci Berényi, the Vienna correspondent of the *Budapesti Hírlap,* who had always been so enthusiastic over the Nordics, lost this enthusiasm by the time I was grown-up enough to have literary conversations with him. By that time the Hungarian modernists – the *Nyugat* authors – had appeared upon the scene and their idols were the Nordics, upon whom the literary page of the *Budapesti Hírlap* was very sharp. Added to this, old József Diner-Dénes, the Ibsen scholar of Hungary (he had originally been an art scholar, a connoisseur and literary critic) was evolving more and more towards the left-wing parties in politics and became Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Károlyi Government in 1918. Uncle Laci hated him for this, and their friendship came to an end.

Willy [Vilmos] Böhm [1880–1949], Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence, then Minister of Defence in the Károlyi Government and later a commissar of the Red Army under Béla Kun, was very active as a social democrat in Austria in the early years of his exile, but he had to leave Vienna in 1934 at the time of the Dollfuss regime. During the Second World War, he was employed in Stockholm at the centre of Allied Intelligence set up in the building of the British Embassy, where his job was to read German, Austrian, Czech and Hungarian newspapers and to be an adviser of some importance to the British Government on Central and East European affairs. Although after he left Vienna, we did not meet again for about twenty years, I remained in correspondence with some friends of his and when he came to London during the war, I passed on all the information on Central and Eastern Europe which he gave me to General de Gaulle through my office. After the fall of the Ferenc Nagy Government in 1948, he became an exile once more in his seventies, and died about a year later.

The *Daily Mail* correspondent Ashmead Bartlett who covered the events of 1919 in Vienna and Budapest and wrote a book on them shortly afterwards,[90] said of Böhm in England, such politicians as he would be made a Privy Councillor (that is, an honour given to former leading Parliamentarians who thus became special advisers to the Crown), and this he said before the first Labour Government of Ramsey Macdonald was formed in England. Nothing was further removed from communism than the whole type of Willy Böhm, a trade union politician of the sort that governed England in the 1960s and 1970s. How fortuitous circumstances decide individual destinies! If our Slovaks and Romanians had remained with us, there would never have been a Hungarian Red Army, nor a commissar called Willy Böhm, but there might have been a King Otto, with Willy Böhm as his Minister of Economy.

Likewise, nothing is more incredible than the fact that such a mild and scholarly Fabian social scientist and welfare worker as Péter Ágoston was ever a People’s Commissar, and afterwards a prisoner of Horthy, sentenced to death. He was saved by the Russian prisoner of war exchange scheme and by the protest of the British Prime Minister Lloyd George, Arthur Henderson, later Foreign Secretary, and Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, a leading Labour politician, who asked questions in the House of Commons, as did also the famous historian Lord Bryce in the House of Lords. Lloyd George replied that he was in full agreement with their feelings and the Hungarian Government had received “in due form” – i.e. in a diplomatic note – the British advice to show “wisdom and generosity”.

In fact, without Böhm and Ágoston, the exit of Béla Kun might have been a most sanguinary event. Owing to them, the dictatorship of the proletariat was buried quietly and smoothly. Böhm and Ágoston negotiated with Brigadier Sir Thomas Montgomery-Cuninghame, British Plenipotentiary for the Allied Powers in Vienna and with Chancellor Karl Renner, head of the Austrian coalition government of Social Democrats and Christian Socials. It was agreed that Hungarian political refugees would be granted asylum in Austria, except (on the insistence of the Christian Socialists) for terrorists and murderers. For example, Tibor Szamuely[91] was challenged by gendarmes on reaching the Austrian frontier and shot himself.

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[90] Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett (1923): *The Tragedy of Central Europe.* London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd.

[91] Tibor Szamuely (1890–1919) was commissar of the Kun Government and commander of the red terrorist brigade ‘Lenin Boys’.

Without Friedrich's silly coup d'état on 6th August 1919, Budapest would have been spared a prolonged Romanian occupation.[92] Without the subsequent reprisals and White murders, we might have had a government able to sign a Peace Treaty much earlier, and perhaps such a Treaty might have been more favourable as the reprisals and the murders excited a worldwide opinion against Hungary. The early Horthy era alienated from Hungary even such well-meaning and fundamentally pro-Hungarian foreigners as Colonel Josiah Wedgwood and Lord Bryce,[93] who had voted against the ratification of the Treaty of Trianon in 1921, being knowledgeable enough men to see its absurdities and its crying injustices.

Many, many years have passed since 1925, when in the last few months of Péter Ágoston's life, I heard from him in Paris the whole story of the sad year of 1919. Over certain aspects of that story my views have not changed, though I am very far by now from the ideas and moods of my youth.

At the end of January 1968, I heard over the telephone from a friend of the Dániel family that old Arnold, Councillor to the Ministry of Agriculture in the Károlyi Government had died on 26th December, ten days after the death of his daughter Vera. It was Arnold Dániel's last request that notification of his death should only be given after a certain delay, and the friend had to consult his papers to find out the names and addresses of people who should be informed. Where these papers are now, I have been unable to ascertain on behalf of scholars in Hungary, as I refused with regret to be his literary executor, not being an economist, and on account of my own work, and Arnold lived in such isolation that I did not know his friends, while his daughter's premature death was a totally unforeseen tragedy. His end was very sad, but in a way, it was surely a relief not to carry into his ninetieth year his grief for the only companion in life he had had since the death of his wife.

With all his queerness and one-sidedness, poor old Arnold Dániel was an interesting and original character, a man devoted to truth and to justice something like what the French call a *saint laique* – and I still think that in his ideas there was more substantial truth and originality than in most of the books written by the old generation of the Society of Social Sciences. This was also Jászi's view, which he often expressed to me. I was able to help him by getting him printed in *Free Europe* and I persuaded John W. Rose, Macartney and Seton-Watson[94] to invite him to sit on the Chatham House Committee on Social Reforms to be applied after the war – his only activities in England. Then

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[92] István Friedrich (1883–1951) had a highly controversial, though in some sense typical, political career, participating in various governments, being a prime minister for three and a half months in 1919. He began as a left radical and became a rightist radical. Forgotten by the eve of the war, he was nonetheless put to trial by the communists in 1951. Shortly after having been sentenced to 15 years prison, he died.

[93] Baron Josiah Wedgewood (1872–1943) was an influential British Liberal-Labour MP, but with highly independent views. He did speak up in the House for the cause of Hungary. Viscount James Bryce (1838–1922), another influential British Liberal politician, historian, jurist, ambassador to the USA, did the same in the House of Lords.

[94] Robert William Seton-Watson (1879–1951), historian and publicist, was instrumental to turning the British public political opinion against Hungary before the First World War, as he was convinced that nationalities within Hungary suffered a lot.

I was able to persuade Pál Auer, István Bede and Antal Radvánszky to take him into the Hungarian Delegation of the Central European Conference held in London in 1950, when he was 72.[95] This conference did not achieve much, beyond the establishment of Radio Free Europe in Munich. Several times he sent papers to this radio station, but they were not always broadcast, as he insisted on raising controversial issues which the American controllers of RFE tried to avoid; he was especially keen on bringing his obsession with birth control into his agrarian sociology and RFE was afraid this would shock Catholic listeners.

On the whole Arnold Dániel was a difficult character, but fundamentally well-meaning and honest, very firmly convinced of the beneficial effect of social science on mankind. There was something of the nineteenth century about his scientific optimism and unfortunately also of the cocksureness of such old synthesists as Spencer and Huxley, or such pragmatists as the American William James. These old Progressives were keener on their Darwinism and their Marxism than the Bourbon Legitimists were on the throne and the altar. At the most they were prepared to add Freud to their list. The thing I appreciated most about Arnold Dániel was that from his naively materialist premises, he was prepared to reach totally anti-materialist conclusions and that he had the intellectual probity to admit that his premises were insufficient, and after some years of Social Democrat Party activity, he became very critical of Marx and Engels.

Zsigmond Kunfi[96] died in Vienna in 1929 from an overdose of sleeping tablets, probably a suicide, at the age of fifty. Lajos Biró died in London, but him I only knew slightly. I met Lajos Hatvany in Vienna in 1923 or 24, again in Berlin in 1930, but mainly I knew him at Oxford and in the British Museum Reading Room in London during the Second World War. Hatvany's third wife Lola, who lived with him at Oxford, was a friend of mine in Paris in the late 1920s, with her first husband, the musician Tibor Harsányi [1898–1954]. Her sister was a friend of my sister Elisabeth, and in February 1920 I was present at the funeral of her father Béla Somogyi, murdered by one of Horthy's ill-famed officers' detachments.[97] The latter was a socialist editor and a very moderate Labour politician, and in 1919 a courageous opponent of the communists. The full background to this murder was only revealed in 1925 by the legitimist leader and former Minister of the Interior, Ödön Beniczky. It was at Oxford in 1943 that I heard from Lola that Béla Somogyi had also a son who committed suicide on the eve of the Second World War; the poor young man had a socialist upbringing, but was more radical than his father, until he went to Russia in the mid-1930s, where all his illusions were quickly destroyed, to the point of despair and ultimately to suicide. When recounting this tragedy, Lola said to me: “That is why I understand so well why a genuine old revolutionary like you is not a Stalinist, not even now in England in 1943, at the height of Stalin’s popularity here.” Unfortunately, I never saw her again in later years in Budapest. At the time of my first visit in 1972 she was not in Budapest, in 1975 we were invited to have lunch with her, but she had to cancel the engagement because of flu, and by our next visit in 1978 she was dead.

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[95] István Bede (1904–1978) was a career diplomat, between 1946 and 1949 ambassador in London. He resigned and never returned to Hungary and worked for Radio Free Europe. Pál Auer (1885–1978) was lawyer, officer, and remained a liberal opposition politician during the Horthy regime. He survived the war and became the Paris ambassador. In 1947 he resigned and remained in emigration.

[96] Zsigmond Kunfi (1879–1929), teacher, Social Democrat leader, journalist, minister and people's commissar, increasingly radical, but in the end, rejected the terror. His suicide has been confirmed.

[97] Béla Somogyi (1868–1920) was a journalist, his and Béla Bacsó's murder by the German-style Freikorps officers caused a great uproar in Europe, but also the end of such atrocities.

In that particular year of my broadcast, 1958, Pál Kéri was seventy-eight and living in America.[98] Rusztem Vámbéry died of a sudden stroke in America; he was in life, as in death, the most fortunate member of this circle. Zoltán Rónai, Commissar of Social Welfare in 1919, whom I knew fairly well in Vienna and with whom I renewed acquaintance by correspondence in the 1930s, committed suicide in Brussels in 1940, to avoid falling into Nazi hands.[99] Sándor Garbai, President of the Council of the People’s Commissars in 1919, I also knew fairly well.[100] In Paris I acted as his interpreter at a Trade Union Congress and at his personal meetings with French, Italian and other socialist leaders, as he did not speak French. He died in Paris in his late sixties, shortly after the liberation of France. He disliked the old communists and hated the new ones and refused to return to Hungary; the new set after 1945 did not insist, of course.

Of the men of March 1919, I met once Colonel Stromfeld. He died at the age of about fifty in Hungary in 1927. I knew somewhat better Péter Ágoston, Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, who died in Paris in 1925, at the premature age of fifty-one, so that I only knew him in the last months of his life.

Of the real Communists, those who were not of the old Social Democrat Party before 21st March 1919 and who did not re-join the Social Democrats in Austria after August 1919, I knew few people. I met György Lukács twice, but his philosophy and literary scholarship never appealed to me. I met Ernő Gerő several times. Khruschev said he was to blame for not preventing the ‘counter-revolution’ of October 1956. Though he was not hanged, like Rajk, for whatever reason, he never reappeared in public after 1956. I met Jenő Landler once or twice.[101] He was a cynical, amusing old humbug, whose communism was hardly serious; he was not a communist before March 1919 and why he joined the Party after August 1919, nobody ever knew. Perhaps the Social Democrats did not want him any more. I knew fairly intimately Andor Berei and Erzsébet Andics, but they were people of my generation, who were very young in 1919 and not even youth leaders like Gerő.

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[98] Pál Kéri (1882–1961) belonged to Károlyi’s inner circle. Sentenced to death for his alleged role in the Tisza assassination, he was transported later to the Soviet Union, from where he returned to Vienna and worked as a journalist, dying in American emigration.

[99] Zoltán Rónai (1880–1940) was a lawyer, and contrary to Menczer’s memories, he was Commissar of Justice, responsible for organising the Bolshevik court system and formulating the constitution.

[100] Sándor Garbai (1879–1947), unlike most members of the Bolshevik government, was not of Jewish origin, and began working as a mason. In exile, he remained a low-profile figure, surviving the war in France; his return to Hungary was not supported by the Social Democrats.

[101] Jenő Landler (1875–1928), lawyer and social democrat politician, people’s commissar and commander in chief of the Red Army in 1919. In emigration, he was an important politician, he is buried in the Kremlin’s wall on Red Square – Menczer’s judgment of him is hardly objective.

I vaguely remember three or four meetings with József Révai[102] whom I intensely disliked on sight. I once saw Béla Kun from a distance; I never spoke to him, but I did not like his face. I knew Laci Pollatschek[103] in prison in 1922; to be frank, I was not sorry when his comrades shot him in Russia. I had casual dealings with younger Communists, who hardly mattered in 1919. One of them was Géza Révész, later a Soviet General and son-in-law of Kaganovich, i.e. a relation of Stalin. As far as I know, he was never purged.[104]

In other words, I knew the most significant Károlyi men and most of the old Social Democrat leaders, but with none of the Communists did I have any close relations, except with one or two younger people of my own generation, who took little part in the events of 1919. All the same, I had well-informed oral sources on 1919, the more so because some of the bourgeois hostages and many of the White Vienna émigrés told me their side of the story in later years.

To come now to Károlyi and Jászi. When I heard that Károlyi had died at St Paul de Vence in March 1955, what a part of my youth, of my life and of my reminiscences died with him! My synthesis on him is now so final that I can state it in a few pages. When I look back to those decades of the 1920s and 1930s in Budapest, Vienna, Paris, Berlin and finally London, and remember Károlyi (still to this day a highly controversial figure for Hungarians at home and abroad) I still see him primarily as the political ideal of my schoolboy years of 1914–1918. He was our defender against the German Kaiser. In those years, I still feel he was right and all his opponents wrong. He saved Hungary's honour by dissociating our cause from the cause of Emperor Wilhelm, Tirpitz and Ludendorff. The opposition of Károlyi and his associates to the conduct of the war remains a fine page in Hungarian history. It did not save Hungary, but it saved our young souls.

A member of one of the greatest noble families in Hungary, speaking several languages, though somewhat handicapped by a harelip which gave him a nasal intonation and made him a poor public speaker, he was a fascinating personality, if not the most skilful of politicians. He had travelled practically all over the world in his youth, he made interesting observations on exotic lands such as India, the Far East and Africa, he was a good raconteur, he did a lot of serious reading on politics and history. He had a very clear idea of Western Europe, and in Parliament, on the eve of 1914, he seriously tried to orientate Hungarian policy towards an understanding with Western Powers. If he had had more support for his Independence Party, and could have become a Prime Minister earlier, it is possible that the First World War might never have broken out. In addition, he had the moral courage to plan a reasonable land reform. He gave Hungary a certain world importance in international politics, with his contacts in Paris, London and America. All these qualities made him a natural leader for students of my generation to admire.

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[102] József Révai (1898–1959) was one of the most influential politicians in the Rákosi regime, in charge of culture and ideology, aptly called the Hungarian Zhdanov.

[103] I was unable to trace the fate of László Pollacsek, but it is true that he worked in the Communist Party and the Soviet Union.

[104] Géza Révész (1902–1977), was, like Menczer, jailed for a couple of months after the fall of the Bolshevik regime, and transported to the Soviet Union where he began a military career. After 1945, he joined the Hungarian People's Army, as a staunch Stalinist, with the rank of Lieutenant General. Between 1957–1960 as a Colonel General, he was Minister of Defence, then ambassador in Moscow. It is strange that Menczer was ignorant of all this. That Révész married Lazar Kaganovich's only daughter (Maya-Maria) (at least for a time) is doubtful, but certainly not impossible.

But like Horthy and his Prime Minister in 1943, Miklós Kállay[105] against the Nazis, Károlyi was struggling after our defeat in 1918 against a fatality. I think his persecutors under the counter-revolution (i.e. the Horthy Government) were covered in ignominy, like Prince Lajos Windischgraetz, for example, or else they were men of extremely narrow horizons, like Admiral Miklós Horthy himself. Prince Lajos Windischsgraetz was a degenerate adventurer, who ended his career with the criminal stupidity of the 'patriotic forgery' of the franc notes in 1926. Twice he had to withdraw in the court accusations levelled against the Parliamentary section of the Károlyi Group of 1914–1918. Unfortunately, the Tharaud Brothers, Jean and Jérôme, took the Windischgraetz memoirs seriously in their book on Hungary: *Quand Israël est roi,*[106] but libel actions could not be brought in France or in Germany in the absence of the defendant. Once in Paris in 1926, when I got out of a taxi with Károlyi, neither of us had the small change for the fare, so Károlyi excused himself for offering a thousand franc banknote. "I don't mind in the least", said the driver, "provided you are not Prince Windischgraetz". "You will be astonished to hear", said Károlyi, "that he is relation of mine, and it is because of him that I am in such a hurry". The poor cabby did not know what to make of this. Neither could he have had any idea of the efforts we were making in the French Press to counteract this national disgrace.

With all his shortcomings which I have never denied (for example his lack of method in forming conclusions and a certain superficiality of judgement which could at times be disconcerting, and an inability to learn from experience) Károlyi was a much worthier man than some of his opponents, especially those who denounced him the loudest. I served him as honorary secretary and information officer for years, while earning a precarious living as an expert on East-Central European affairs on French and German newspapers and weeklies. My relations with him – a young man vis-à-vis a former Prime Minister – were always very correct, sometimes warm and friendly, sometimes cool, according to whether we agreed or disagreed.

To finish with Károlyi: in 1944 I disagreed violently with the whole pro-Soviet line he adopted at that time, though shortly afterwards I received from him the assurance that personally "we remained friends". My thought, my ideas, my feelings over most things had already for some time developed in a direction far removed from his. This must be the reason why he omitted any mention of my name in his Memoirs *(Faith Without Illusions)* published in 1956 in London by Jonathan Cape, although those of his wife, published in Hungary: *Together in the Revolution* and *Together in Exile* mention my close association with him, as I heard later.[107] We had already differed on politics in Paris in 1926–1929, at least as regards Russia. If I felt strongly the revolutionary mystique, I was never a theoretical Marxist, I never joined the Communist Party and I felt isolated and rather uncomfortable in the socialist one, as I have already said. Then in the 1930s I differed again from Károlyi, for although in that decade we were both anti-Fascist and felt the same about Hitler, mere negation was not enough to keep us together. I went deeper and deeper in the 1930s into the religious and metaphysical roots of politics, and these were strange thoughts to Károlyi.

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[105] Miklós Kállay (1867–1967) was Minister and later (1942–1944) Prime Minister of Hungary, actively but unsuccessfully seeking the termination of the alliance with Germany. After the Nazi takeover, he was arrested and deported, but survived the war, and remained in emigration (Italy, USA).

[106] First edition in 1929, a new edition is from Nabu Press, 2011. The title translates *When Israel Is King.* The Tharaud brothers (Jean: 1877–1952, Jérôme: 1874–1953) were prolific writers, travellers, winners of the Goncourt Prize.

Here I can tell a story which nobody else can tell, of Károlyi's 70th birthday party in London in March 1945, organised by old friends of his. A few days before, Tina Hatvany had telephoned me to ask whether I would like to be present. Naturally, I said yes. It was a Sunday afternoon. I arrived with a bunch of snowdrops, the only flowers I could find on a Sunday, which Katinka Károlyi[108] immediately put in the buttonhole of her fur cape and wore throughout the little feast of drinks and cocktail canapés. Lola was there and Ilona Kabos, a celebrated pianist in England, amongst other ladies. Lajos Hatvany was to be the main speaker at the gathering, the Czech Minister [Hubert] Ripka came to say a few words. Professor Karl Mannheim and Karl Polányi were there, also Jenő Práger, the socialist publisher and bookseller, the journalist Henry Guttmann with his daughter and many other people whom I used to know, but whose names I cannot recall at the time of writing, more than thirty years later.

Károlyi singled me out from the crowd. I was wearing my French Lieutenant's uniform, with the ribbons of my medal of the *engagés volontaires* and my Africa medal. I told him that a few days before I had spoken at a celebration of Jászi's 70th birthday, organised in the drawing room of Judith Lady Listowel[109] by Viktor Sztankovich and Miklós Szenczi. Károlyi knew about this event, although he did not come, Judith not daring to invite him, as she had never met him personally; in any case, the Károlyis were hostile to her and to the whole Hungarian set to which she belonged. "I do not think anybody speaking of Jászi could avoid speaking of me", Károlyi said to me. "I hope, my dear President", I replied, "that you never attributed to me any intention of avoiding your name, though as you well know, I often disagreed with you and so did Jászi". "I know", said Károlyi, "he was perfectly frank and sincere about this and so were you. Our personal relations remained the same, however, though some people did not like this". I guessed this was an allusion to an intrigue of Karl Polanyi and Ilona Polanyi-Duczynska, who tried to establish themselves as the only representatives of Károlyi in London and separate him from me – although I had never tried to get into any position or organisation as Károlyi's representative and made my objection directly to Károlyi himself to any policy of fellow travelling and the pro-Soviet line.

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[107] The English memoirs of Katinka Andrássy were published under the title *A Life Together. The Memoirs of Catherine Károlyi.* London: Allen and Unwin, 1966. Menczer refers here to the Hungarian volumes published in Budapest (1967, 1969).

[108] Countess Katinka Károlyi (née Andrássy, 1892–1985) had an extraordinary life, was a real globetrotter and an unflinching supporter of the Soviet cause in the 1920s and 30s (earning the moniker Red Countess), but even after 1945, with his husband's relinquishing with the Stalinist regime in Budapest, she remained a socialist and loyal to the Kádár regime, dying in Antibes, France but buried in Budapest.

[109] Judith Listowel (1903–2003) had an extraordinary life: born in Hungary (Kaposvár), she studied at the LSE (1926–1929), married William Hare (Labour MP, later Lord), but they divorced (Judith was conservative Catholic, a staunch critic of communism as well), and began a highly successful career as a journalist, specialised later on African affairs. Dr Viktor Sztankovics (1908–1988), journalist, reporter at the BBC and Radio Free Europe. Miklós Szenczi (1904–1977) was Professor of English (Budapest), he launched the Hungarian studies at the London University in 1937.

As Jászi wrote to me more than once in his letters from Oberlin, Ohio, "even from the Russian point of view a democratic and federalist Károlyi would be more valuable than one more fellow traveller and candidate for the role of the late Béla Kun". Of course, in the situation of the years 1941–1945, none of us advocated any active anti-communist policy. We fully realised that the enemy was Nazi Germany, but to praise the Soviets beyond the recognition of the Red Army achievement in the defeat of Hitler was – in our view – neither wise nor dignified. We were prepared to go as far as Churchill went in his capacity as an ally of the Soviet Union, but not a step further.

At the end of the meeting, I applauded Lajos Hatvany, who said certain things very well and tactfully which I could approve, as well as things which I did not like. Lola Hatvany then approached me: "You know, I telephoned you because Katinka asked me to do so?" I expressed my astonishment that she should have doubted my wish to come. "I had no doubt but discussing the matter with Katinka, she thought you were too close a friend to Mihály to get an ordinary printed invitation like many of the others and would prefer a personal invitation. Secondly, she thought that if you wanted to say no, it would be less painful for you to do so to me, rather than to her." "I still cannot understand", I replied, "why Katinka could not accept my repeated assurance of loyal friendship, untouched by political disagreements". "She did, but some people tried to raise doubts in her mind, until her daughter Eva told her that nobody spoke of Mihály with such affection as you did." As I took my leave at the end of the party, Katinka, who had been smiling throughout the evening, gave me her hand to kiss and suddenly had a very sad expression on her face as she said: "We were always good friends, and so we shall remain." This was the first time in the twenty years of our acquaintance that I had felt her to be warm and affectionate, not just polite and charming, but somewhat frigid.

For many years after 1945, I would never have thought that I should see Katinka Károlyi again. In fact, the first personal message I received from her was only in 1973, when Tibor Hajdú came to visit us in Midhurst, to talk over with me his biography of Károlyi (as Pál Szende used to say: the interminable Károlyi problem).[110] She was not in Hungary in September and October 1972 on the occasion of our first visit, nor in November 1975 on our second visit. But in June 1978, our first visitor at the Hotel Volga was Tibor Hajdú with Katinka's telephone number (not in the Directory) and we saw her two days later in the old Károlyi Palace.[111] Her appearance astonished me. I have never known a woman in her eighties to show such vitality and energy. She wore an emerald green silk blouse and white slacks, in the fashion of the day. Her face was older, naturally, than when I used to see her so frequently, but she had preserved that tall, slim figure for which she was famous. I introduced Marjorie. She remarked that her daughter Eva [1915–2006] and her grandchildren Mihály, Caia and Antonia (incidentally my goddaughter) Bayley [father: John C. W. Bayley 1911–2002], had told her a lot about my "charming, intelligent and very good-looking wife", that she was very happy to hear that I had found one, and would have much enjoyed knowing her long ago. She gave me both volumes of her *Memoirs* with a dedication and Tibor Hajdú's biography of Károlyi in Hungarian, as well as the Hungarian version of Károlyi's *Memoirs.* (I already possessed *Faith Without Illusion* in English, as a review copy given me by the London intellectual Catholic weekly *The Tablet,* but the editor, Douglas Woodruff, had refused to publish my review, finding my characterisation of the author "much too friendly" for Catholic readers.) And of course we talked all the time of Károlyi, in the very Palace where in October 1918, just before the Revolution, in the days of the youth demonstrations preceding it, I first saw her, though I only spoke her for the first time in Paris in April or May 1925, when she arrived with her children from London at the Gare du Nord and twenty or thirty Hungarians were waiting there to welcome her.

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[110] Tibor Hajdú (1930) is a Hungarian historian, specialised on post-Compromise Hungary. His book on Károlyi (a biography) appeared in 1978, but he continued to work on it and published another book on him in 2016.

When I was in Munich in 1970, Hungarian friends there who had read her reminiscences which had just appeared in some Hungarian review, told me that she mentions my Paris years 1925–1929 and defends me against rumours that I was a friend of the communists and influenced Mihály Károlyi in a pro-communist sense. On the contrary, she says, I was even more anti-communist than such old friends of Károlyi as Jászi and Szende. On the whole, I was told, she speaks of them and of me with great affection. My Munich friends, especially a young lady, wondered whether she was still the beauty she used to be, her recent photos apparently still showing her entirely to her advantage. As I had not then yet seen her again since 1945, I could not answer the question, or describe with any competence the dresses she wore. Of the whole rather sad story of Károlyi, the only thing that still seems to interest the younger generation, after half a century, is Katinka Károlyi as a *dame du temps jadis* [Villon]. She has her legend in her lifetime, more so than her once famous mother, née Eleonora Zichy, or her grandmother Andrássy-Kendeffy, whose Christian name Catherine she was given in baptism.

Now for Jászi, upon whom I have written so much. I was one of the best-informed witnesses of Jászi's evolution and of his thought, as his letters to me and references to me he wrote in letters to others – including Mihály Károlyi – and all my letters and memoranda to him which he kept, and which are now in the Jászi Archives at Columbia University, New York, prove. In this evolution, his personal relation to me played a certain part. The 50-odd type-written pages I sent him in reply to a circular letter he addressed to old friends shortly after Mihály Károlyi's death in 1955 give my final views on 1918–1919, and my views of the whole of Károlyi's later activities. I saw Jászi himself from the perspectives of all the phases of my own life: before 1918 when I was a boy; in Vienna and in Paris in the years of the Károlyi exile group from 1925–1928; in Berlin during his European tour in 1931–1932; and finally, in London in 1947. The years between were filled with a fairly intensive correspondence between us and even after 1947 this went on, to some extent, almost until his death in 1957.

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[111] The regime granted an apartment for the 'Red Countess' there.

Jászi always had the *élégance d'esprit* to give the hospitality of his columns in *Huszadik Század* (1900–1918) to authors of an opposite tendency to his, provided that they offered a substantial contribution to the topic of that particular number, and that their style was objective and to the point, and somehow original.

The Munich review *Látóhatár,* which appeared for some five years after the last war, claimed to continue the tradition of Jászi and Rusztem Vámbéry and was the most 'pink' of the Hungarians abroad. In the first numbers, Jászi wrote the last Hungarian essays of his life. Later, Arnold Dániel made some contributions as the last survivor of the Jászi group, one of them being on the peasantry and the land reform in the Károlyi era. I saw roughly four or five numbers of this review in five years – they never sent me a copy or asked me to contribute, although amongst the radicals of long ago Jászi was my closest friend – and I only knew of the existence of the review through old Arnold Dániel, another radical.

Jászi was somewhat shy and very reserved with strangers, but in a circle of intimate friends and family relations, became lively and talkative. He was often the guest of my parents, his mother (Aunt Rosa) being my father's first cousin, and she had been my father's companion since childhood. My father (also Béla Menczer, 1856–1918) was conservative in his politics, but his political friends were either members of Parliament of Tisza's old Liberal Party, or else Members of Parliament such as Uncle Béla Komjáthy, of the moderate Independence Party. These friends were, however, interested in meeting Jászi, although my father himself thought of him, like his friends, as brilliant but very eccentric. My father was a European of his generation, very widely travelled, speaking French and German as well as he spoke his native Hungarian. He was a graduate of Vienna Technical University and served for some time in the Danube Regulation team at the Iron Gates [the famous gorge], where his name was perpetuated on a marble plaque, with those of the other officials who had worked with him. This plaque was removed when the Iron Gates became Romanian. He also represented Hungary at International Congresses of Public Works in Paris and other capitals. Thus, Oszkár found he had much to learn from him and despite differences of opinion, temperament and age, the relation between the two men was always very friendly and affectionate. As a child, I was often the guest of Aunt Rosa, who gave birthday parties for her favourite grandchild Lily (Livia Simai) whose mother Alice, Oszkár's sister, was my godmother. (After almost a whole lifetime, by the most extraordinary of coincidences, I was to meet Lily again for the first time since 1923 in Budapest, at György Markos's house in 1972, Lily being a close friend of György's second wife Ágnes, who had died shortly before.)

Jászi's first wife Anna Amália Lesznai[112] I knew, of course, but I was much too young to frequent her famous literary and artistic salon in the Pasarét [Budapest district] villa, at which Ady, Babits, György Lukács and others were the celebrities. I am not sure that Oszkár enjoyed the company of all of Máli's guests, which reminds me of a good story told me later by Pál Szende in Paris. One day he had gone to the Pasarét villa. "Go away, Oszkár, out of the room", he said, "the ladies want to hear stories, and I don't want you to blush".

I had already as a schoolboy some conversations on serious matters with Oszkár, but a closer personal friendship developed between us after my trial and imprisonment when I was in Vienna. Then I saw him subsequently in Paris, and on his trips from America to Europe, again in Paris, in Berlin, and finally in London on his last trip to Europe in 1947.

Jászi had a certain influence between the two wars on American thought. His articles in *Foreign Affairs* (edited by Hamilton Fish Armstrong) were often widely quoted and he was the first European in the United States who urged the clarification of America's position towards the phenomenon of Bolshevism, Fascism and Nazism. Some one-sidedness and some shortcomings in his thought hardly alter the fact that the American intelligentsia became aware of some of the European problems through his work at Oberlin College, Ohio, and in *Foreign Affairs,* and that amongst the European thinkers in the United States who counteracted the isolationist mood of the two decades between the Wars, Jászi was the first and perhaps the most important. He went on his first American tour in 1925, he settled in Oberlin for good in 1925. Salvemini, Salvadori and the other Italians only went there a few years later and the Germans only began to invade the American colleges and universities after 1933. It is certainly not true to say that all these Europeans were right, in contrast to all the Americans who were wrong, but one can say without contradiction that this period, opened by Jászi in 1925 when he finally settled in America as Head of the Political Science Department of Oberlin College, Ohio, represented a chapter of some importance in the history of American political thought.

Likewise, the Hungarian Károlyi group played its part in Europe, whether for good or for ill is another matter. On this side of the Atlantic, Károlyi was a figure in the *New Statesman* and the Fabian group in England and a character, if not a thinker, in European anti-Fascism – if this is the right word to describe the movement of some of the English and French intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s. József Diner-Dénes and Pál Szende were close enough to Léon Blum, in the years preceding the rise of the Front Populaire in France of 1936, which was after all a significant event in French history. Kunfi, Szende and Zoltán Rónai had something to do with Austrian socialism between the two wars, and this Austrian socialism was a significant phenomenon between 1919 and 1934 in the history of the democratic Labour movement.

I wrote in 1960, long before I knew that Hungarian scholars in Hungary were going so deeply in the 1970s into the sources in their research that it was very unfortunate that for so long there were only two extreme and uncritical views of the Károlyi group. The one view was that of the followers of Károlyi and Jászi. They claimed that Károlyi and Jászi were right against the whole of Hungary and the whole world for twenty-five years, while the other, the rightist mentality, either ignored their existence, or attributed the whole turn of events in 1918–1919 to the personal resentment of Károlyi against his class and explained the whole series of revolutions in Central Europe by Katinka Károlyi's overheated ambition, which made her husband the tool of all the conspiracies, allegedly organised by her.

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[112] Anna Lesznai (1885–1966) was a highly talented poet, writer, graphical and textile artist. She died in New York but was buried in Budapest.

If only the Hungarian conservatives and the old nobility had kept their heads and made a reasonable, serious and critical appreciation of Károlyi and Jászi (who, by the way, as we know best, were very far from being identical in their views and who often differed on questions of the most fundamental importance, as was by 1930 or so indeed public knowledge), Károlyi's worldwide significance would have been greatly reduced, and perhaps to the right proportions. Károlyi was one of those amateurish aristocratic politicians whom the English peerage produced in greater numbers than Hungary. The stupid exaggerations of his enemies, who were either his distant cousins, or at least fellow members or the National Casino, the Park Club, the Jockey Club and similar places, whose favourite sport was idle and malicious gossip all night and every night, created an almost all-European Károlyi movement and an International of intellectuals for the defence of Károlyi and the Hungarian Revolution of 1918–1919.

Jászi, no doubt, would have been in any circumstances an intellectual leader in his country and a statesman of European reputation. He had all the qualities for this part, and it is a very tragic fact indeed that this outstanding personality (I never doubted he was one, although I never followed his uncritical admirers in their exaggerations) could not have been better used for the good of his country. I saw a great many English, French, Belgian, German, Italian and Austrian Labour and radical politicians of the same generation, and I remain convinced that Jászi was their equal, and in many ways their superior, because of the originality of his thought and particularly by the independence of his character and his firm moral integrity.

Jászi's main passion was a critical and analytical one, and he was reluctant to accept certain inherited prejudices, while on the whole his deeper nature, his inclinations were conservative and in a profounder sense, traditional. I wonder whether Jászi, if he had been born French in the same year 1875 as he was born Hungarian, would not have sided with [Charles] Péguy [1873–1914], or with [Jean-Pierre] Bainville [1879–1936] in the revision of the old radical concepts. I can also imagine him occupying a place in French thought similar to that of Daniel Halévy [1872–1962].[113] But the new ideas in Hungary round about 1900 were radicalism, socialism and anticlericalism.

He was beyond doubt a serious talent and a man of perfect integrity; personally, I was very fond of him. His great shortcoming was the lack of critical sense. Somehow, as a reaction to the dominating liberalism of the turn of the century, he began to advocate new ideas. He felt (and so did many other people of his generation) that grave and new crises were ahead and that the official optimism concern not only unfounded, but hypocritical and self-interested; this official Liberalism optimism was the ideology of the profiteers of the era of the two Tiszas, though the more important of the two, István, did not share it. Jászi took up every idea coming from abroad, the Great-Austrian doctrines of Redlich[114] and Kralik; as well as Marxism, the new revolutionary trend of Georges Sorel, as well as fragments of the Fabian theories of England. Amongst so many ideas, there were no doubt some excellent ones, other were vague, and again others were frankly detestable. Though never a full Marxist, Jászi only broke with Marxism when the Bolsheviks appeared, and I know well that his aversion to the communists was perfectly sincere. On the whole, just because of his perfect sincerity and honesty, Jászi had a long evolution, and the reason why we liked him and kept to him for some many years, was precisely because we always found in his thought something new and unexpected, and because he was the most striking opposite to an automaton. His failure to become a party leader was perhaps the reason for his success with independent intellectuals; he never spoke for a party, he spoke for himself, and so he always disappointed his followers. The Liberals, under whose regime he started his career, and who were, in the first years of his review *Huszadik Század* well disposed towards him, seeing in him the possible leader of the Young Liberal generation, were disappointed when he turned radical over the question of universal suffrage in 1906. He was picked up by the Socialists, the freethinkers, the Leftish elements of the old 48-Party. Some years later, it became clear that Jászi had some Christian, almost Catholic inclinations (to which I shall refer in a moment) and that he had Conservative sympathies, and that he would have been ready to cooperate with Archduke Franz Ferdinand's projected reforms.

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[113] Péguy (poet, essayist), Bainville (historian, journalist), Halévy (historian) were prominent figures of the French Right (Péguy in his later years), with Bainville perhaps the most radical one.

The shortcoming of Jászi was that he advocated his superficial temporary enthusiasms with the same gravity as his most profound and serious convictions. He made as much of an impression as of a principle, and he devoted as much attention to small matters as to basic and fundamental issues. With a sort of prophetic insight and profound intuition, he was often right. But when exposing his views on issues over which in my opinion he was right, he often lacked the true perspective and the right sense of proportion.

There was certainly some truth in his diagnosis that the two fundamental issues of 1900–1918 were the land reform and the nationality problem. Still, it is by no means certain that these two issues would have disappeared through a radical democratic solution, and I should need a full book to tell where I thought Jászi was right and where I thought he was wrong. To put the question of the land reform in a nutshell, the real agrarian problem of those days was not the big land, but the gradual decline of the agrarian way of life, which had always strengthened the family spirit and assured independence of a genuinely democratic kind for millions of people, not to mention an abundance of proper fresh food. Now, instead of this, we have a huge industrial and intellectual proletariat which can easily succumb to evil forces – to resist which forces Jászi devoted his life. Yet it is obvious that he was wrong in claiming a monopoly of the true remedies, which were often worse than those advocated by others whom he often failed to be charitable or even just. In everybody who had word of appreciation for Tisza, or who approached the central problem from a conservative point of view, he saw not only an enemy, but even the corrupt servant of some vested interest. In later life, he made great efforts to be more just, but in later life he was hardly an active and influential factor in the evolution of Hungary.

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[114] Josef Redlich (1869–1936), legal and constitutional theorist (specialised in local law), first in Austria and later in the USA (Harvard University), held various cabinet and political offices and posts. Richard Kralik (1852–1934), writer, historian, philosopher of culture, also an important Catholic intellectual.

Despite my genuine affection for Jászi and my very high opinion of his intellect and integrity, I did not like the fact that he claimed to have a complete and consistent theory of politics, whereas in fact he had none; his emotional reactions to events were strong, pure and often intuitive, but not really those of a dispassionate observer or a social scientist, which is after all what Jászi was supposed to be. He had a certain dogmatic intransigence, but without a real dogma or system, and he did in fact have an evolution as I have said but was reluctant to admit that he had ever been wrong in the past.

Jászi the man was one of the finest characters I have ever known, and I think that his American students learned a lot from him and sincerely liked him. He was a man of wide reading, of many ideas, of lively reactions and genuine emotions, but he was totally unfit to be party leader, though perhaps in more fortunate circumstances than those of 1918–1919 he might even have become a fairly successful cabinet minister. Perhaps the best thing for Jászi would have been to act as an adviser to a statesman, somewhat behind the scenes and to be a little more elastic, and admittedly so, in his views and ideas. His worst errors were due to the fact that he trusted almost anybody who claimed to be a man of a system or of an ‘ism’ and that he believed anything that people of an apparently prophetic inclination told him. This was the basis of his life-long friendship with Arnold whom I thought to be a good and honest fellow and even man of some originality, but surely not the genius which Jászi believed him to be, and this same weakness brought him under the influence of Karl Polanyi, whom I knew well, but never admired.

To sum up, my views on him remain sympathetic but not uncritical. I think he had an outstanding mind, and he was a man of very unusual courage and moral strength. I did not want to praise him to the detriment of everybody else in his generation as did his admirers who were more concerned to debunk the old Hungary than to be just to Jászi, but of course I frankly disapproved the conspiracy of silence of the other, conservative, side. Jászi’s early books, his Society of Social Sciences, the review *Huszadik Század,* edited by him, had a considerable influence on Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Croat and Serb thought, and Jászi’s two English books *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (London and New York, 1924) and *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (New York, 1930) and his contributions to *Foreign Affairs* since 1925, were the first serious works of American scholars on our problems. If Jászi’s fervent admirers in Munich, or his old opponents had allowed me to speak at the time of his death, I could have revealed the fact that Jászi came very near to my own Catholic views towards the end of his life; fortunately, I already suggested this in 1945 in the *Slavonic Review* (London) on Jászi’s

70th birthday.[115] I still think that this essay of mine on him gave the best summary of his thought and so did he, despite some objections. I still remember that he told me that his younger son Andrew (an art historian at Yale and now Professor of German Literature at the University of California)[116] gave my essay in the *Slavonic Review* to Andrew's then fiancée 'to introduce the family'. Jászi's daughter-in-law, a born American of German descent, was a Catholic and was later active on a Catholic Committee for the release of Cardinal Mindszenty.

When Jászi came to London in 1947 shortly after our marriage, he asked us if he could come to Mass with us on Sunday to the Jesuit Church at Farm Street, at that time still a very famous intellectual centre of influence. Afterwards over lunch by the Serpentine in Hyde Park, we had a long discussion on religion, when we discussed the intellectual's road to Catholicism, in which he was interested, because it was the position of some of his friends, as well as of myself. My wife was charmed with the handsome, gallant old gentleman, very elegantly dressed, with his wide-brimmed hat at the slightly raffish angle of the early 1900s.

On clearing out old papers in 1971 which we did not intend to take from London to our country home in Midhurst, Marjorie [Menczer's wife] found a letter to me from Pál Szende, dated October 1932. How different the world looked then! I often missed Pál Szende on the eve of the War, during and after the War for an exchange of views on great events. He died too early in 1934. But of course, in those days he would have been 92 and few people reach that age. He could still have been alive in our early Hampstead period, and I am sure Marjorie would have liked him much better than she did his contemporary Arnold Dániel. How quickly a generation passes! I have known at pretty close quarters men the centenary of whose birth will occur in a few more years. I spoke to witnesses of the Franco–German War of 1870–1871 both in France and Germany. I heard eye-witness accounts of the coronation of Francis Joseph and Elisabeth in 1867, I still remember the old Honvéd Home at Soroksár where in 1910 or 1911 or so, some twenty veterans of 1848–1849 lived and wore their pensioners' uniform in the style of 1848–1849 and their silver medals for bravery; the youngest of them was about 80 and now the youngest veterans of the First World War must be about the same age.

When I think of old friends who died long ago, I always wonder whether at my age it is still possible to meet people with whom I have some common interest and shared experience. But perhaps one is never so old as one thinks. I read in *Magyar Híradó* that Maxi Fenyő settled in Vienna, after many years in Paris, New York and Munich, to make sure that he died on the banks of the Danube, instead of any other river.[117] His friend Endre Ady wanted to die in Paris "far from the Danube", as he said in one of his poems, but he did not succeed in doing so. Nor will I, in all likelihood, die on the Danube embankment. I was born there, I spent the first university years of my life there; since the end of the War, I saw the Danube often enough between Ulm and Belgrade; the tales of the old river never left me, not even on the banks of such other rivers as the Congo, the Quadalquivir, the Potomac and the St Lawrence. All rivers flow into the seas and all the tales of a life end in the infinity of the sea of human history. From the Res Publica of the Earth, a life proceeds to the Kingdom which is not of this earth.

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[115] Béla Menczer (1946): Oscar Jászi. *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review,* 24(63), 97–104.

[116] Andrew Jaszi (1917–1998), born to Oszkár Jászi and Anna Lesznai, remained with his mother but joined his father later in the U.S. He earned his PhD at Harvard and was an officer in the U.S. Army. He was visiting professor at other prestigious universities, but Yale is not listed among them; and he was highly honoured at Berkeley.

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[117] Miksa Fenyő (1877–1972), lawyer, member of Parliament, one of the founders of the *Nyugat* journal and the Nyugat Publishing House, also Executive Director of the Hungarian Industry Association. He survived the war in Budapest, though in hiding, and choose to emigrate only in 1948, first to Rome, Paris and later to New York, but did, indeed, move to Vienna to die close to his beloved land. He also published journals, travel books, etc.: Fenyő was indeed one of the most distinguished and remarkably integral characters of Hungarian cultural history spanning over regimes.

Chapter 6

My Final Reflections on ‘Revolution’

In these days of the 1970s when historians in Hungary are working not only on the police records of the interwar years, but on our personal correspondence and memoranda which form the Jászi Legacy deposited in the archives of Columbia University in New York, they can prove how right we were. Right to fight the beginning of the counter-revolution under Horthy, later on fascism in Mussolini’s Italy, then finally National Socialism in Hitler’s Germany. Our cause was, I still feel, a good one, even if we were not right all the time in our methods.

Now all these years later, we know for certain that the Hungarian counter-revolution would indeed have soon been liquidated, if the Fascist regime had not been consolidated in Italy, if Hitler’s preparations for seizing power had not been made while the Weimar Republic was still lingering on, if the collaborationists of the future in France and the Munich appeasers in England had not set to work, and if there had not been that stupid attitude towards a Hungary which was defeated and vanquished (but not by the Czechs). The Second World War began to be foreshadowed by 1930. Europe rushed towards new catastrophes and terrible misfortunes, but I still feel in the 1970s that the tragic Hungarian question of 1918–1921 was something like the key to a healthier and better Central Europe, as we thought it could be. The blame must lie with that worldwide incompetence which failed to recognise this and failed to help create a healthier and better Hungary, instead of the Hungary of the early Horthy era, which Károly Méray-Horváth (not perhaps in other respects the most profound of Hungarian thinkers)[118] characterised adequately in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in 1920 as “the first visible symptom of death on the body of a dying Europe”.

It was in the 1930s that Europe became the continent of sanguinary frivolity, a phrase which epitomises the whole decade. The catastrophe of a civilisation became a plaything for playboys. Revolution became a frivolous game. There have been fanatics and murderers in every age. But now there was a new phenomenon: the man who sets out to kill, and soon after gives his vivid impressions of the murder. He is the learned and professional revolutionary, who has his statistics ready in order to compare them with the murders of the French Revolution at the very moment that he commits the murder. As Joseph Roth, the Austrian author of *The Radetzky March* and other novels, commenting on the Nazis said: “I have the suspicion that they are not murderers, but professors of murder.” This was the new phenomenon of the age of the radio, of the telephoned reportage. These words occur in my Journal in September 1955. Are they not as valid nearly a quarter of a century later, to describe our contemporary terrorists, whether they come from the Middle East, Japan or Western Europe – Ireland, for example, or the Baader-Meinhof gang in West Germany? These terrorists have nothing to do with Revolution in its true sense, they are criminal gangs.

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[118] Károly Méray-Horváth (1859–1938) was a journalist, also vice-president of the Society of Social Science, promoting the theory of organic sociology. He also wrote papers on aesthetics.

Of course, I am not saying that in 1918 the representatives of Democracy, President Wilson, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, or Wickham Steed of the London *Times* (a power behind the scenes for decades) were consciously frivolous. But all the same, the frivolous gamble began with the First World War, for it was then that began the improvisation, the contempt for principles, the cynical lie called propaganda – that gamble whose aim was to safeguard personal popularity, not to safeguard the state. Military war, grave, tragic and morally responsible military war, became impossible with the new technique of warfare, which made warfare more sanguinary and at the same time casual, accidental and frivolous. This is the ultimate philosophy of the history of 1914 and its consequences, but of course it must be added that a thousand causes prepared the generation of 1914 for all this. And even now, do we see the significance of 1914–1919 clearly?

The revolution of 1918–1919 – the Károlyi era – was perhaps inevitable and some of its men had excellent intentions; a catastrophic situation caused by the First World War, and especially the prolongation of this war until the total defeat of the Central Powers, and the almost complete collapse of the social order which had until then been taken for granted, prevented the well-intentioned men of November 1918 from carrying out reforms which had been overdue for a generation or more. The lack of understanding and the incompetence of the politicians of the victorious Western Powers, the unscrupulous nationalist demagogy and the rapacity for power of the Czech and Romanian politicians, to whom the Western victory opened up new and completely unexpected opportunities, drove all Hungarians to despair and some Hungarians – by no means all – to communism. Then after the fall of Béla Kun's communist regime came a counter-revolution, which proclaimed itself to be the Christian Restoration and debased by its horrors and scandals every ideal of a Christian political order; and which was partly stupid, narrow-minded and unimaginative, partly hysterical and brutal; and finally, as in 1926 with the forgery of the banknotes appeared to be more ridiculous than criminal.

This is, I think, a fair summary of 'our' Revolution and counter-revolution, of 'our' history of 1918–1919 and the subsequent years. Nobody who lived through that period should be such a prig as to claim that he remained all through those years pure of every sin and was all the time right in his judgement, never erring and never shooting beyond the target. An intelligent and honest counter-revolutionary (for example the late Tibor Eckhardt, with whom I had a long conversation in New York in 1971 in his last years) was ready to admit the faults of his companions and his own errors of those years. A sincere and once militant revolutionary (for example György Markos) went as far as he possibly could in criticism and self-criticism in his memoirs published in Budapest in 1971.[119] Nobody on either side was perfect. We lived through a sad and tragic period in history, we survived it, we even learned some wisdom out of dearly bought experience, and we are not ashamed of our past. It would have been infinitely shameful for men, especially young men, not to take some passionate position, and to remain indifferent in the face of such a tragedy. It was more human to be wrong about something than to go on untouched by events, and to pursue purely personal, egoistic aims. On the other hand, I do not see any reason to glorify ourselves, our late companions and friends, our movements of many years ago. We may indeed have saved our souls, we achieved very little else, we failed too often and in too many things. Between Jászi, Szende and József Diener-Dénes there was some common ground, although they often quarrelled (as György Litván tells in his book, published in 1978).[120] They all wanted, and foresaw a democratic Hungary, a transition from the aristocratic-liberal Andrássy–Tisza era to a democracy dominated by the Labour movement. Jászi, however, refused to join the Social Democrat Party, which was too Marxist for him. Szende was less hostile to the theoretical foundations of Marxism, but he joined the Social Democrats after 1920 only, when in exile in Austria. He thought it was his vocation to prepare the old bourgeois cultural élite, to which he belonged, for Socialism and he thought he could accomplish this task better outside the Social Democrat Party. (A Labour Party on the English model would perhaps have appealed to him more, as it certainly would have done so to Jászi.)

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[119] *Vándorló fegyház* [Wandering Prison]. Budapest: Magvető, 1971.

Jászi and Szende believed that the best way to the inevitable and desirable Democracy lay through the Independence Party, of which Károlyi was elected the leader on the eve of the First World War, on the death of Ferenc Kossuth [1841–1914] (son of Lajos, the leader of 1848–1849). A Hungary made economically independent by a National Bank, and by her own Customs and Excise Department would have ceased to be a primarily agrarian state, dominated by the 'feudal' class of big landowners. An industrialised Hungary would have produced a stronger labour movement, while the internationalisation of the labour movement would have extenuated the nationality problem of old Hungary and would have allowed more scope for a movement of land reform. In fact, the war of 1914 broke out before Jászi and Szende – until then mainly known through the Society of Social Science – could found a new political party based on these ideas.

József Diener-Dénes on the other hand was hostile to every nationalism, including the Independent Party and expected the tradition to democracy to come rather from a closer union of the peoples of a Greater Austria, as proposed by Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his circle. He spoke a great deal to me about his connections with the Belvedere and of his influence in Vienna in imperial circles. To be frank, I did not entirely believe my old friend and thought he was exaggerating, until after his death I found confirmation of this in the Hungarian memoir of Kristóffy (Hungarian Minister of the Interior 1905–1906),[121] the posthumously edited Journals of the Austrian Member of Parliament, Cabinet Minister and later American professor Josef Redlich, not to mention various biographies of Francis Ferdinand.

Károlyi's revolutionary radicalism was sincere, but he thought it a point of honour to persevere in it, and he had no further evolution after 1919, when he broke with his old world. I understood when in 1919 he envisaged a rapprochement with communism. He did not believe that the new national states created by the victorious Peace of the Western Allies could last, especially that a badly diminished Hungary could survive; thus he thought the only potential ally for Hungary against the satellites of the West (Czechoslovakia and Romania) was the Soviet Union. He was right when he stated in the early years of his exile: "The Western Entente had won the war but lost the peace." Indeed, one blunder followed another in British and French politics for some twenty years after 1919, and finally resulted in a Second World War worse than the first and ending in a worse result.

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[120] *„Magyar gondolat – szabad gondolat." Nacionalizmus és progresszió a század eleji Magyarországon* [Hungarian Idea, Free Idea. Nationalism and Progression in Hungary during the Early Years of 20th Century]. Budapest: Magvető, 1978.

[121] József Kristóffy (1859–1928): *Magyarország kálváriája: Az összeomlás útja. Politikai emlékek 1890–1926* [Hungary's Calvary: Path to the Collapse. Political Memoirs 1890–1926]. Budapest: Wodianer, 1927. Menczer and Aurel Kolnai mention this and his name in their correspondence frequently and with endorsement. Kristóffy was a main champion of universal suffrage.

Yet, I still did not believe that communism could be the right alternative. The tragedy of Europe lay exactly in this that no alternative existed, although some of the blunders between 1919 and 1939, and again in 1945, could perhaps have been avoided. The old world was finished with the First World War, but the new world was in no way better. Changes in the world order occur. We have to accept them, sometimes it is even a good thing to promote them, but I do not believe that political and social changes, inevitable as they may be, are always an improvement on the previous era.

If since 1945 anybody has tried to be fair to Horthy and Bethlen in the émigré press, it is myself, and not one of the people who served them when they were in power and who owed their careers to them. I have a tendency to keep to lost causes, and once upon a time this moved me to keep to Károlyi and to anti-fascism but lost their beauty for me once they became winning ones. If I have hated anything in my life, it was the crowd of those heroes who suddenly turned professional freedom fighters, anti-fascists and radical democrats and socialists towards 1943–1944, when it became obvious that these would be the slogans of the moment of an Allied victory, which by that time could not be far away. I remembered how most of these people had been impressed by Mussolini ten years before, what marvellous reporters they were whenever the Horthy regime needed some public clap-trap, and how happily they found good jobs in Horthy's service, until the neighbourhood of Nazi Germany from March 1938 onwards began to threaten them too much (for racial, not for political reasons) and how quickly they rushed to the Home Office in London in June and July 1940 to get transport to America, in case Britain was invaded by the Nazis. Conventionalism is still better than the success due to pseudo-revolts of people who have nothing of a rebel nature, and who only 'revolt' to please such people who organise rebellion into a successful career. It is the solidarity of the hypocrites which I liked least in this world, it is the lie of pseudo-rebellions which made my blood boil in these last few decades when revolutionary careers were fashionable, and the people I could bear least were those who first sold their communism and afterwards made a second career by selling their disillusionment. This is why I have probably attributed for a long time too much importance to the Koestlers of this world.

When Horthy's *Memoirs* appeared,[122] I found it a naive book not too well written; the old Admiral was never a literary man (or even a man of much reading, I suppose) and his grasp of events was never a deep one. He was a counter-revolutionary by his social position;

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[122] The first edition was published in German: *Ein Leben für Ungarn* [A Life for Hungary]. Bonn: Athenaeum Verlag, 1953.

circumstances made him the leader of a counter-revolution rather than his own inclinations; I am almost sure. Unlike many of his critics, I believe that his aversion to the Nazis was sincere. I am convinced that the Nazis intended to murder him and only delayed so because Horthy, with his companions the former Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg, the former Hungarian Prime Minister Miklós Kállay, the French Socialist leader Léon Blum, the former French Foreign Minister Yvon Delbos, the French ex-Premier of the Front Populaire Édouard Daladier, the Cardinal Prince Sapieha, Archbishop of Cracow and Primate of Poland was a hostage of some importance. It is known that up to the last moment Himmler and his henchmen were trying to buy their lives, a hopeless proposition without a few eminent hostages. As to Horthy's anti-communism, his expression of this is very superficial. On what a superficial level was Horthy an anti-communist! The whole diagnosis of one of the greatest turns in world history, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of the German power, is given a gossipy form which is not even plausible (partly even false and refuted a hundred times). He had no sense for the depth and the true proportions of the tragedy in he was after all one of the actors.

Concerning the accusations against his regime, he is equally superficial, and what the French would call *borné*. He not only fails to refute them (except those raised by the legitimists concerning the events of 1921); he even fails to sum them up. There are also many obvious chronological errors in the book, but these are perhaps to be explained by his great age. He is not uncritical of the sinister Gömbös, but he has hardly any knowledge of the more serious actions against this evil spirit of the twenty-four years called (with much exaggeration) the Horthy era.

On the credit side, I would, however, remark that there was much common sense in this man, who is right when he points out positive achievements of governments appointed by him. On the whole, Hungary restored much from the ruins of 1918–1919 and if circumstances had been happier in Europe, Hungary might have become a sound and positive factor on the international scene. The counter-revolutionary leaders of 1920 were dying out by 1930, some of them had evolved in the light of new circumstances. Gömbös, when he came to power in 1934, was more of a comic figure than a danger to Europe. The sad thing is that when Hungary was beginning to regain her balance, the whole of Europe began to lose hers.

It was, however, deplorable that Horthy allowed legitimate political aims to be disguised in an ideological alliance with Italy, and that a servile press written by muddle-headed Hungarian journalists, by people who built their careers on slogans, was unable to put Hungarian relations with the Axis powers into sober and objective terms. Pál Teleki's suicide[123] and Miklós Kállay's attempt to regain a free hand prove that Hungary did not want to be involved in an Axis war, and that ideologically she had nothing to do with Hitler and Mussolini. This became clear much too late, and the Western Allies were unable or unwilling to find remedies. Horthy was not a monster; in the last crisis of his era, he behaved well, and in the end, he was a victim of the Nazis. Perhaps even Gömbös was more stupid than wicked. The Károlyi men were not great men, and it became a more and more difficult task for us to defend their government of 1918–1919 when Károlyi himself adopted a totally different line in exile. This line bore little or no resemblance to the Károlyi party of 1918–1919, which had established his image in France and England during the First World War – an image to which I was devoted as a schoolboy.

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[123] Count Pál Teleki (1879–1941) was Prime Minister of Hungary when Hungary joined the Germans in invading Yugoslavia. Teleki was a rightist-corporatist politician, but resented the German aspirations and Horthy's decision. Heavily depressed, he committed suicide, partly to save the country's honour, an act that impressed Churchill deeply (testified by his Memoirs).

I do not see any analogy between my position in the 1920s and the revolutionaries of the 1960s. There is no violent counter-movement of any kind, no fascism or Nazism either in power, or striving for power, as was the case then. Moreover, there is no active or immediate threat of international war. In the 1920s and 1930s, war was on our doorstep, and if we joined the socialist and leftist groups, we did so because they seemed to be an alternative to war. The very essence of fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany was a return to the war, and even such minor military regimes as Horthy's (in the first few years after 1919) were set up by secret military leagues with a nostalgia for the trenches, or at least for the barracks in which war was being prepared. The then Establishment tried to engage mercenaries to safeguard positions which it owed, not to social inequalities and injustices in general, but to the First World War and its sequences. The regimes of those days lived on national grievances and dissatisfactions which the propaganda services of some of the established regimes tried to inflate into a frenzy fanaticism, as in Hungary first, then in Italy and finally in Germany. The loud shouting of slogans became a profitable trade and promising career. This created a thousand forms of abject servility, an unbreathable atmosphere, and for some time we felt that the socialist movements were something more honest, more sincere, more really concerned for the moral welfare of the European nations – until leftish conformism swallowed up practically everything good and honest that might have come from this side, until the pro-Soviet ideology became as immoral and abjectly servile as its fascist counterpart, and as divorced from anything genuine amongst the real people and their concern for justice and for harmony in life and society.

Amongst the very early communist sympathisers – those of the first ten years 1917–1927 – there were people whose positive aims were false or very thin, but whose despair over Europe was deadly serious. There was a type of communism which those people who felt the values of the old European culture to be vital, might have interpreted as a warning. In this attitude, there was something grave and tragic. I found it mostly amongst workers, not amongst intellectuals who reached office in the Party and obtained publicity as pseudo-bourgeois radicals, or pseudo-Christian 'progressives'. In that early phase, I can imagine a tragic and serious case for communist sympathies, but nothing of the kind in any motive which could make a man a Nazi. In this sense, I can still understand and respect today the old friends of my youth who remained communists, or at any rate became, in the course of time, dissident communists.

I would certainly not claim that our movement of those days was right on everything. But at least the young people were genuinely seeking freedom, while it seems to me that the real sense of the present revolutionary movements is to seek new masters. The louder they shout for the end of the system, of the Establishment, or whatever name they give it (oligarchy would be the best word, but Greek terms are no longer popular) the more certain it appears that those young people would be the first to yield to any really brutal despotism, and they would serve it as well as their predecessors of the 1920s and 1930s served Mussolini and Hitler.

I had various anti-activities: I was vehemently anti-fascist, anti-Nazi and finally vehemently anti-communist. But all the time I felt that one should not be a professional of any 'anti'-movement. My case against fascism and Nazism was basically a conservative one; it was the plebeian and not autocratic character of fascism and Nazism which made me hate these things. In fact, I have always denied, and still deny, that Mussolini and Hitler were autocrats, they were impostors, demagogues, adventurers, anything but authoritarians. I cannot imagine men in history further removed from anything I would call authority. My quarrel was with the early Horthy era, which called itself the Christian Restoration and debased by its horrors every ideal of a Christian political order. My quarrel was with fascism and Nazism, sanguinary caricatures of the patriotic and military virtues which I respected, but which Mussolini and Hitler turned into base demagogy, cowardly murder and stupid servility. My quarrel was with communism, a debasement of the ideals of philosophers from Plato to Hegel, of old dreams of wise men on the reign of truth and justice, established through knowledge and science.

I will never believe the world perfect enough to be able to live without revolutionaries, and only a solid conservative order can produce true, genuine revolutionaries. When the Pope and the Emperor divided power over Europe between them, there was room for St Francis of Assisi. When the Church was safe, when empires and dynasties were solidly established, there were statesmen, sometimes bishops and sometimes rulers, who could dare to make radical reforms and audacious innovations which had a chance of success because the authority which introduced them was unchallenged and universally recognised. A weak and tottering government never dares to do anything and if the Monarchy and the Church in modern times were reactionary, it was because the progressive radicals, so-called freethinkers and agnostics made them weak and tottering, because this was their aim, rather than to make social improvements and genuine reforms prevail. This is about all my political philosophy learned from a long experience of life and the one I will still try to get across in my remaining years.

I have analysed in my book *Harvest and Waste: A Study of Western Culture* (also based on my Journals)[124] the essence of revolution in its various aspects, which has been one of the main preoccupations of my thinking throughout a lifetime. I can only understand revolutionary feelings as a despair over the shallow emptiness and declining society, as a revolt against empty and dead appearances and empty routines, of which the spiritual content and the true meaning has been lost long ago. It is against false, decrepit, hypocritical authority that people revolt, they do not revolt to get better food or more equal shares and rations. Thus, every revolution is ultimately for God, or against God, and its destinies are decided on the spiritual plane. The approach of George Orwell in *Animal Farm,* for example, is that of a sentimental materialist, and it is a material reality, the *anima sensitiva,* of animals that disappoints him. Like so many other sentimental materialists, Orwell has never reached the only plane which really matters. The central problem of all revolutions, the problem of Order, of Authority and Liberty, escapes him altogether.

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[124] Manuscript held by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

What is true in literature is also true of politics. Most books fortunately get forgotten, but all must be read. One must overcome all political passions, but one must have had them first. One must be ready to die, but this is no excuse for not living a life full of vitality, a full, adventurous, passionate and ardent life. I do not know who said that culture is the thing one keeps after forgetting everything that one has learned. Higher politics are what one retains after years and years of partisanship, but a real higher sense for politics is a still rarer thing than true culture.

Interlude: Into Exile

I crossed the Danube in Budapest for the last time in 49 years in September 1923, on my way to join the émigré group in Vienna, with a passport in an assumed name in my pocket. It was a dark night. I spent it sitting in the train. I did not sleep; at twenty-one years of age, I could stand a sleepless night easily. I had no projects for the future. I was just excited at the adventure of seeing the world. I was sure I would see much of Europe within a short time and that somehow, I could succeed in making a living, if Gyula Illyés and Pál Szegi had succeeded in doing so in Paris, György Markos in Vienna and Laci [László] Ney in Berlin.

I was, of course, no stranger to Vienna, though I had not been able to go there in the war years and I spoke German more fluently than I did French at that time, on account of my school lessons and my Vienna aunts. I also had several holidays abroad with my parents as a schoolboy in German speaking countries, in Italy and in Dalmatia, which was at that time still part of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy. With these experiences behind me, I can nevertheless say that it is an enviable thing to be a complete stranger in any country. You are like a child without an understandable language, and you travel in a state of mind which is full of curiosity and keen to receive new impressions. Once you know the language well and find your way about in a foreign city, you become a member of the native society and you find nothing astonishing, new and attractive in it anymore. Time passes and you grow older, even in a foreign country. As a man grows older, he imagines that the country of his youth somehow remains young in his absence and he hopes, sometimes against every possible logic, that he will see the country of his youth again. Many people do not feel entirely grown-up while their parents are still alive, and once they have lost a mother to whom they can chatter about all the little incidents of their daily life, they begin to look at life quite differently. It is something like this for the émigré. Why I left my mother country has been told in the previous chapters. Why I did not return to Hungary for so long will be told here in due course.

À la recherche des neiges d'antan [in search of the snow of yesteryear], I wrote in my Journal in August 1955 when I went to Vienna again for the first time after the war. I really did not think in 1925 that my next visit would be with a British wife and a British passport, nor could I ever have imagined that my reason for not going further east in 1955 from the Ostbahnhof, or the Danube steamer station in Brigittenau would be the exact opposite of my reason for going westwards in 1925. *Tempora mutantur?* Most certainly, yes. *Et nos mutamur.* But a whole life’s philosophy or a whole life’s lesson lies in the fact that times have changed for the worse and some individuals at least have changed for the better. Perhaps there is some consolation in the fact that people like me who did not care much about themselves and their precious personalities when they were young can change for the better in times which have changed for the worse. On that visit to Vienna in 1955, I did not yet know the whereabouts of any of the companions of my youth except [historian] Emil Franzel [1901–1976]. If I could have met them, what should I have told any of those twenty or twenty-five boys who accompanied me from the Schönbrunn Heim to the Paris train in 1925 and gave me a mock serenade on the platform which attracted the attention of all the passengers on my train and the one on the opposite platform? From that Westbahnhof I went very far. Geographically as far as the fourth degree below the Equator. Spiritually from the late Red Heim in Schönbrunn as far as *Romae apud Petrum.* I should have told them that the Earth is – round. And so is Life.

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Chapter 7

The Károlyi Group in Exile

From 1920 onwards, the Hungarian exile groups began to be organised. Károlyi and his ministers, Jászi and Pál Szende, had left Hungary before the resignation of Béla Kun and remained in exile in Vienna and Prague after the counter-revolution. Károlyi spent a short time in Czechoslovakia; Jászi, Szende and the Social Democrat leaders, some of them ex-people's commissars like Böhm, settled in Vienna, after being interned for a time after their arrival. The problem of Hungarian refugees became a difficult one for the governments in Vienna and Prague. Plots were discovered concerning Hungarian terrorists, who had penetrated into the neighbouring states with the intention of killing Károlyi, capturing Hungarian refugees and bringing them back to Hungary. The problem of security for prominent refugees seemed to be more than the police forces of the new states could cope with. (As to Károlyi, wherever he went, he presented a security problem for the country of his residence.) He was not wanted in Vienna; when he wanted to settle in Florence in 1920, the Giolitti Government in Italy refused to grant a residence permit and he refused police orders to leave Italy at once (an unusual proceeding for a personality of international repute) and despite protests in the Italian Parliament by Turati and Claudio Treves, the police order was not revoked. For some time, he and his family lived in Dubrovnik; from there he received a permit to go to England in 1923 and finally in 1925 he took up residence in Paris.

Slowly as time passed, Vienna ceased to be the centre of Hungarian émigré activities. Austria was an impoverished country where few people could find a suitable occupation, except some trade union leaders such as Garbai or Garami, and leading Social Democrats such as Böhm, Kunfi, Zoltán Rónai, who fitted in to a vast bureaucratic organisation of the Austrian trade unions and cooperative societies. On the other hand, France became the country of immigrants from all over impoverished Central Europe. French employees realised that the hope of reparations from Germany was nothing but an illusion and guest workers, as we would call them today, were needed in great numbers to reconstruct war-damaged territories. Particularly since 1920 when the United States was only prepared to take a very restricted quota of European immigrants, France, especially the northern mining region of the Pas-de-Calais, was the goal of immigrant workers. Polish workers occupied huge new housing estates in the suburbs of Paris and helped Renault and Citroën to build up the new car industry in Billancourt, Boulogne-sur-Seine and Levallois-Perret. The mining district of Lens in the Pas-de-Calais had no less than 60,000 Hungarian workers by 1925, many of them being easily admitted to France, as on account of the Treaty of Trianon their passports described them as Romanians.

As well as this considerable working class population who came for economic rather than for political reasons, there were the political refugees. In addition to our Hungarian group, there were former White Russian Army officers who worked in the factories of the Paris suburbs; the Russian intelligentsia in exile grouped round Professor Pavel

Milyukov [1859–1943], former leader of the Constitutional Democrat Party in the Imperial Duma and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Provisional Government of Petrograd from March to July 1917, and Alexander Kerensky himself, who transferred his newspaper from Berlin to Paris in 1923 and whose followers were called the social revolutionaries. Then there was an independent group of Russian intellectuals who founded a Russian University College in Paris at which Nikolai Berdyaev lectured. He was the foremost philosopher of Orthodox Christianity, whose books in French had a considerable influence over Christian thought later on, in the 1930s in France, England and Germany.

Amongst other prominent Russians in Paris there was Vassily Soukhomline [1885–1963], foreign editor of *Le Quotidien* (founded by Edouard Herriot in 1924 for the electoral campaign of that year) whom I knew well when I was the principal correspondent on Central European affairs for the same paper. He had left Russia as a young man before 1914, when he had been a social revolutionary of Kerensky's party and had studied as a refugee at an Italian university. Another notable personality was Angelica Balabanova [1878–1965], who was for some years very close to Mussolini, when the latter was still editor of *Avanti* and an active member or the Italian Socialist Party. Her sectarian disposition and Marxist dogmatism later on alienated rather than attracted people to the anti-fascist cause. She was in a state of almost constant warfare with Soukhomline, whose balanced views and solid information on Russia and Italy sounded more convincing to serious French politicians of the left-wing parties, the radicals and the socialists. Lastly there was Oreste Rosenfeld [1991–1964], a former Menshevik, who analysed in a masterly way the new phase of the Soviet State after the death of Lenin in *Le Populaire*. This was the paper of Léon Blum, who wrote its leading article every day.

There was also a Bulgarian exile colony, the leading member of which was Kosta Todorov [1889–1947], who had fled to Paris after the murder by one of the secret military leagues of the Peasant Party Prime Minister Alexander Stamboliyski [1879–1923] in June 1923, within a few months of Mussolini's *marcia su Roma*. He was a politician with an adventurous past, a Macedonian freedom fighter under Turkish rule, then in 1914 when Bulgaria was still neutral, he volunteered for the French Army. At the end of the war, he was one of the leaders of the Peasant Party of Stamboliyski, which had been opposed to Bulgaria joining the Central Powers in 1915, and he became the Permanent Delegate of Bulgaria to the League of Nations.

Lastly there was a small Spanish group, the most famous member of which was the historian, poet and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, though with the Spaniards, we Hungarians had social and intellectual rather than political affinities. Unamuno turned up in Paris every now and then but lived mostly at Hendaye at the frontier of Spain.

However, from the point of view of the Hungarian Károlyi group, and for me personally, by far the most important exile group were the Italians, who began to arrive in 1925, some to escape violent threats to their lives, others only when the Fascist State in Italy became 'totalitarian' and the last remnants of a parliamentary opposition faded away. The most notable of the new Italian group were Giuseppe Emmanuele Modigliani [1872–1947], the famous barrister and parliamentarian, who started to appear at public meetings in Paris by the end of 1925, and who was joined a year later by Arturo Labriola [1873–1959], Pietro Nenni [1891–1980], Claudio Treves [1869–1933], Oddino Morgari [1865–1944] and finally by old Filippo Turati [1857–1932], whose prestige in the International Labour Movement was the most solidly established, but who at the age of 70 at the time of his arrival in Paris in 1926 was no longer a very active leader. A group of Italians belonging mostly to the Christian Democrat movement who were active in Brussels and London kept contact with the bulk of the Italian émigrés who were in Paris (these were Don Luigi Sturzo [1871–1959], who became in exile chaplain to the Italian church in London, Francesco-Luigi Ferrari [1889–1933], who lectured at the University of Louvain and Professor Angelo Crespi [1877–1949], who lectured at London University, the first and the last of whom were my intimate friends).

Some Italian personalities in Paris with whom the Károlyi group were in frequent contact had no particular political affiliation in exile, but enjoyed nonetheless a European reputation, or had held positions of some importance. First and foremost of these was the former Italian Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti, who first lived in Switzerland, then for many years in Paris.[125] Count Carlo Sforza [1872–1952], former foreign minister and ambassador, lived in Brussels, but made frequent trips to Paris. Alberto Cianca [1884–1966], former editor of *Il Mondo,* and one of the finest experts on international affairs and Alberto Tarchiani [1885–1964], former editor of the *Corriere della Sera* of Milan also lived in Paris, the latter becoming after the Second World War ambassador to Washington.

The two extreme tendencies within the Italian exile groups were represented by the communist [Ruggero] Grieco [1893–1955] and the former Member of Parliament Francesco Buffoni [1882–1951], who broke however with the Communist Party and joined the Nenni group of socialists after the fall of fascism and represented this party as a senator. The opposite extreme was Armando Zanetti [1890–1977], editor of the *Giornale d'Italia,* a man of wide culture and experience, a conservative who based all his hopes of a post-fascist régime on Crown Prince Umberto and the return of the Savoy Monarchy to the liberalism which had made its greatness at the time of the Risorgimento. A passing reference should be made to Alberto Giannini [1885–1952], who in the late 1920s edited in Paris the satirical paper *Il Becco Giallo* and gave it a wide circulation in Italy by posting copies to totally unknown addresses, picked out at random from the telephone directories of various Italian towns.[126] I regret to add that Giannini, to the surprise of all his former companions and friends, became reconciled to fascism, broke with his former associates and for some time edited a new paper in Brussels directed against them. His wife, Bianca Pittoni [1904–1993], daughter of the former Mayor of Trieste, divorced him in Paris when he made his submission to Mussolini.

We, the Hungarian exiles grouped round Count Mihály Károlyi, began our Paris activities at the end of the year 1924. We had seen the first signs of German rearmament in Hungary, encouraged by the secret leagues of Gömbös. The Vienna émigré press had ample information that the secret military leagues were the instruments of General Gömbös. This was proved beyond doubt in 1923 when the murderers of the former German Minister of Finance and leader of the Catholic Zentrum, Mathias Erzberger and of the German Foreign Minister, Walter Rathenau,[127] a democrat, themselves announced that they had escape routes to Hungary, where they enjoyed the personal hospitality of the Defence Secretary General Gömbös himself. It was our conviction that unless all the democratic forces of Europe could be united, this German rearmament, encouraged by the Fascist seizure of power in Italy (Mussolini's *marcia su Roma* was in October 1922) would mean a catastrophe for Europe. There were solid grounds for optimism. Firstly, there was the victory of the *Cartel de Gauche* at the French elections in May 1924. The Cartel consisted of all the radical groups opposed to Poincaré, that is, Léon Blum's French Socialist Party, the SFIO (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière) and Aristide Briand's small but important party of Republican Socialists, three of its eight members having been Prime Ministers since 1914: René Viviani [1863–1925], Aristide Briand [1862–1932] and Paul Painlevé [1863–1933]. Then there was the simultaneous evolution in England, particularly the first Labour Government under Ramsay MacDonald [1866–1937], to give us some hope. So also did the government of Chancellor Gustav Stresemann [1878–1929] in Germany, who was certainly no friend of the Socialist International, but who in his sober realism sincerely preferred the Weimar Constitution and an agreement with the Western Powers, to the risky and adventurous alternative of a military government for Germany.

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[125] Francesco S. Nitti (1868–1953) was Prime Minister of Italy in 1919–1920, professor and a prominent Catholic Socialist politician, later representative of the Radical Party, a staunch anti-communist and anti-fascist. He returned from emigration to Italy and pursued his political career further.

[126] The magazine was edited by Alberto Cianca (see above).

Italian Fascism was only one aspect of the more general problem on our minds: the possibility of a German war of revenge, which might come unless the counter-revolutionary regimes and secret military leagues of Eastern Europe were broken and removed in time by a democratic turn of events, sponsored and actively supported from the Western capitals of Paris and London.

These views of ours were exposed at the international conferences of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, which I must explain. The Ligue des Droits de l'Homme dealt with deportation orders served without explanation or possibility of appeal to refugees suspected of being communist agents, and also to guest workers who might not have the proper passports and visas, or who had been seen by police informers with criminal records at some leftist trade union meetings. I, and some thousands of other people, were virtually prisoners in the country in which we lived because our papers were not in order. We could not get jobs because most jobs (not only in the press and similar trades, but in business life as well) made travelling necessary and no firm would employ people who did not have visas and permit to work. Wherever we arrived, we had to struggle hard to have our identity document, issued in another country, recognised. Sometimes a visa was refused, sometimes permits to stay which had been granted years ago were suddenly withdrawn. In my early Paris years, the Ligue was not aware of the corruption in the police force, which meant that visas and even false identity papers could be bought with bribes. This was not revealed until the great Stavisky scandal of 1934, which also revealed the secret Nazi penetration of certain elements of the police force, in order to harass political refugees, amongst other aims.[128]

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[127] Erzberger (1875–1921), a Zentrumpartei politician, was responsible for undersigning the Compiègne Armistice, securing himself the hatred of rightist groups in Germany. Rathenau (1867–1922) was one of the architects of post-war Weimarian Germany, also fiercely hated by his opponents (he was of Jewish extraction).

When the Croat–Macedonian terrorist organisation murdered King Alexander of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister, Louis Barthou, in the same year, I remember I wrote from London, where I was then living, a long memorandum on the silly system of compulsory visas and the unjust and arbitrary deportations of refugees and guest workers for Maurice Schumann, then on the staff of the official Central Press Agency of the French Government. I had recently made his acquaintance at the 'Saturdays of Wickham Steed' at Lansdowne House, Holland Park (of which much more later). I knew a great many facts from my work for the Ligue and Maurice Schumann gave ample publicity to the whole subject in several papers. Nowadays, in the face of the international criminal organisation of terrorists, kidnappers, hijackers, spies and saboteurs from Ireland to Palestine, from the Basque country to Africa, it is realised that visas are not the remedy against such evils. If this had been so in the 1920s, my life would have been easier.

The Ligue carried some weight, because of the prestige of the French Ministers Édouard Herriot and Paul Painlevé who were members of the Central Committee; and also because of the then great prestige of the French Socialist Party led by Léon Blum. We had the very best connections with these French circles. At the international meetings both of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme and of the Socialist International, our Hungarian representative was Pál Szende, to whom I was an assistant. Pál Szende, the former Minister of Finance in the Károlyi Government of 1918–1919, was now a lecturer at the Collège Libre des Sciences Sociales in Paris. He bore his great knowledge lightly and lectured in a style of witty causerie. At public meetings, his sense of humour and his famous bald head made him popular with Socialist working class audiences, who otherwise disliked the intellectuals of the party. Another Hungarian representative was József Diener-Dénes, Undersecretary of the State of Foreign Affairs in the Károlyi Government, a patriarchal figure for us in his seventieth year at the beginning of our Paris activities, and a living source for me personally of Austro–Hungarian history. He was not a well-known socialist to the general public, as he was a poor speaker, but he was such an experienced master of the discreet approach to governments that he was possibly the one politician of our émigré colony who realised the full extent of the danger inherent in the instability of the Weimar era in Germany (1919–1933) and for this reason he had the ear of Léon Blum and other French politicians.

I can add here a personal postscript on Léon Blum. Naturally, when I was a very young man, there was a certain distance between a foreign correspondent on Central and East

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[128] Alexandre Stavisky was a financial speculator with political ties. His death (suicide or police 'murder') caused turbulences and revealed deep mistrust and division between left and right in France.

European affairs and a famous politician-editor. But when I reviewed a book on the Riom Trial (of Daladier, Léon Blum and General Gamelin under the Vichy régime in France in 1942)[129] which was published in *Free Europe* in London in 1944, and which he only saw in September 1945 on a post-war visit to London, he remembered me well enough to send me a handwritten card saying how touched he had been by my review. This card is now in the Budapest archives [the Hungarian Academy of Sciences].

Our group was keen on a unification of the various émigré movements, and I personally spent many hours exposing our ideas, our hopes and fears to Nitti, Modigliani and other refugee leaders, but the first and foremost difficulty was that we were not united amongst ourselves. The best-known name of the Hungarian exile group was without doubt Mihály Károlyi, who in every respect was fit to be our leader, but who represented at the same time a very difficult personal problem for us. The year he took up residence in Paris, 1925, was the critical one for Hungarian émigré activities, as I shall tell. But first let me tell you about the Paris of those days.

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[129] The trial was meant to prove the political ineptitude of the Third Republic. It ended disgracefully in 1943, after suspension, further discrediting the Vichy regime.

Chapter 8

Paris in the Nineteen Twenties

Seeing the film, of Zola's *L'Assomoir* one day in a London cinema[130] reminded me yet again of the Paris of my youth and set in train such a long meditation that I copy it here in the hope of amusing my readers before I continue the story of the Károlyi émigré group.

Whatever one thinks of the cold indifference with which Zola tells his sordid stories, the film was very effective as a picture of the faces of Second Empire Paris: *the gardien de la paix, l'ouvrier, le commerçant* and others. My first memories of Paris go back to a time when the town was not very different, despite the taxis, the electric streetlights and the metro. The Second Empire style continued until Americanisation set in, in Paris as elsewhere in Europe. In the 1920s, *les Halles*[131] still looked as it did in Zola's time, who described this 'stomach of Paris'; some of the characters of Murger's La Bohème[132] still lived on in Montmartre, every quartier had its own spirit and atmosphere. Round the Bourse you could meet people out of Zola or even out of Balzac. Most streets were narrow, many houses, perhaps most of them, were dirty. Only the Grand Boulevard was very straight, the inner city was centred round the Opera; this was exactly the style of the Préfet Baron Haussmann,[133] the style Napoléon III. The horse-drawn fiacres could still be seen, though cars, taxis and buses multiplied by the thousand every year. Some old men still told their terrible stories of *les Prussiens, les Communards, les Versaillais.* The war of 1914–1918 was less often discussed.

Round about 1926, the bourgeois still went out wearing a veston, or tailored jacket and a hat (hatless men were called names by disapproving passers-by and they were all visiting foreigners) while the *ouvrier* had a blouse and a casque. Most men in the working classes were bearded and almost all policemen wore this symbol of authority and dignity. There were no bars, only cafés with a *limonaderie,* as the shelf with the apéritifs used to be called. The bourgeois were employees of firms and shopkeepers, other people were called *ouvriers* [workers] and looked like it. Women wore hats, not headscarves; if the *ouvrier*'s wife had not reached the stage of wearing a hat, his daughter did so. With a hat, she became *ma bourgeoise,* as taxi drivers used to call their wives. There were more cars and taxis than in Vienna in those years, but until 1929 or 30, horsecabs were still a usual sight in the streets of Paris; in the outer suburbs in 1925 there were about as many horsecabs as cars. It is true that in the neighbourhood of the Opera you only saw cars and those in quantities I could never have imagined in Budapest or Vienna.

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[130] The English title is *The Drinking Den,* directed by Albert Capellani (1909).

[131] The great food market was replaced by a supermarket in 1973, which yet again was replaced by the Westfield Forum des Halles after 2010.

[132] Henri Murger, *Scenes of Bohemian Life,* a series of short stories (the first appeared in 1845), re-written with Théodore Barrière as a play, on which Puccini's and Leoncavallo's respective operas are also based.

[133] Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891) was the mastermind of the structure and design of modern Paris.

I think the Second Empire style disappeared finally with the inflation of the franc in 1926–1927. During the inflation Paris became extremely cheap for people who had dollars or pounds. There was an Anglo–American invasion of Paris in the spring and summer of 1926. The Paris of writers such as Ford Madox Ford [1873–1939], novelist and editor of *The Transatlantic Review,* Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound *et al.,* who settled in Paris in the 1920s and who came for the stimulus and excitement of the French cultural scene was not ours; the Károlyi émigré group were in Paris for serious political reasons and our paths never led us into such milieux, quite apart from our poverty, which meant very modest accommodation and living. It was rather in the real Paris Bohème where we found our friends and companions and Montparnasse cafés and libraries were our meeting places, because most of us had no homes, only hotel rooms.

There was my friend, Robert Desnos,[134] the poet, who in the late 1920s, in reply to the campaign of a French abbé against immoral art, started a campaign against moral art, i.e. the *bondieuserie* style. He went to the Place St Sulpice to destroy some pictures in this style in one of the shops and was arrested. At his trial, Maître Henri Torrès [1891–1966], the famous barrister of those days, produced witnesses – usually pretty young dancers and actresses – to give evidence that they were practising Catholics, which did not prevent them from showing themselves almost naked on stage. Robert Desnos was fined, but he continued to be a very popular figure in Montparnasse. Later, when the war came, he joined the Resistance during the German occupation of Paris, and he died in a German concentration camp. After the war, François Mauriac paid a great tribute both to his poetry and his patriotism in *Le Figaro.*

Amongst the Hungarians, Bohemians were the painters Ferenc Erdélyi [1904–1959], Lajos Tihanyi [1885–1938], Vince Korda [1897–1979].[135] Lajos Tihanyi was almost stone deaf, so that we had to pass notes to and from in order to talk. At one of the dinners of the Club de la Rive Gauche (not of course a real Club at all) an American millionaire was introduced to him as being interested in modern painting. After pretending to listen to all the American's tales, he asked Piroska, Erdélyi François's wife, in Hungarian: "Do you know which language that idiot is talking?" Piroska replied: "How do you know he is an idiot if you can't hear him?" "Because I am a portrait painter and I looked at his physiognomy." Károlyi himself moved freely Amongst the various émigré colonies, including old American journalist friends when had settled in Paris, but to the best of my knowledge the new, fashionable literary Bohème was not his milieu either.

With the Americans came the American bar and all the other innovations. The First World War had receded in French memories; German tourists with their already consolidated marks were welcome. Americans and Germans combined to spread such fashions as hatlessness for women and even for men, a sports jacket or just a shirt instead of the veston with waistcoat, tie and hat. Beards came off, whiskers as well, married workmen began to be clean-shaven, a state formerly prevalent only amongst the gentlemen of the Faubourg St Germain, or at least the higher bourgeoisie. The police stopped operating rondes, or sudden swoops, in order to clean out the quartiers: this was because the English, American and other visitors objected. The police began to shave. The rough, autocratic Second Empire police suddenly grew into a modern police force without heavy military manners. 'English spoken' appeared on policemen's armbands – a part of the police force almost became a section of a very obliging tourist office. *Clochards* [vagrants] on the Seine embankment were rare; the new type of police sergeant treated them philanthropically and there was no more fun in being a vagabund if it did not put them in prison. By the time the Second World War broke out, there were hardly any more *clochards* in Paris, while *taudis,* or hovels of the old kind were mostly demolished.

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[134] Robert Desnos (1900–1945), journalist, surrealist poet, critic. Arrested by the Gestapo for resistance activities, he managed to survive Nazi concentration camps but succumbed to typhoid after the liberation of Terezín.

[135] Korda was also a successful scene designer (and brother of Alexander Korda). Tihanyi was arguably a very fine painter, but Erdélyi was also praised by critics, all of them were world citizens, living and working in various countries.

In 1925, looking at a Paris woman you could easily distinguish *la dame du monde* (discreet make-up, hat with a little veil, long gloves removed and put on the table in more elegant cafés and restaurants); *la demi-mondaine* (more or less the same dress, but more suggestive make-up; *la midinette* (office girl or assistant from the better class of shop who gave her appointments for lunch in a restaurant, hence the name); *la bourgeoise,* i.e. the baker's, grocer's, café proprietor's wife, her dress suggesting respectable marriage, family life and no further interest in males; *l'ouvrière* (without a hat and with rough hands – a headscarf would have made her a *paysanne* [rustical outlook] a hat a bourgeoise); *l'étudiante* (*béret* and boyish attire, attractive for ex-soldiers who between 1914–1918 had forgotten about girls and appreciated comradeship more than *galanterie.*) With the exception of *l'étudiante,* all these Parisiennes were products of the Second Empire. Even *l'étudiante* had a precursor in George Sand under Napoleon III, as well as lesser-known women such as Daniel Stern, Marie d'Agout [1805–1876], Liszt's mistress. The *midinette* did not type under the Second Empire, she was a *modiste* [dress/hat-maker] or a *couturière* [dress-maker] while *l'ouvrière* under Napoleon III worked with less complicated machines, but still in a factory. Some stenographer-secretaries were already employed in the 1860s in Paris, as elsewhere (this is how Dostoyevsky met his wife).

On the whole, much of the 1860s style was still about in 1925, even if the crinoline was a thing of the past. Mistinguette's dances were still versions of the can-can, with plenty of underwear exhibited. Maurice Chevalier's songs were still in the Second Empire tradition – including La Madelon, which made such an unexpected career in 1914. The old Frenchmen of 1925 still talked of their "terrible histoire de 1870–1871"; I still met old Communards and old Versaillais for whom 1870–1871 was *l'autre guerre* [the other war] and I remember one in particular who tried to convince me that "il ne fallait pas proclamer la République le 4 septembre, c'était tout à fait faux et faisait le jeu de Bismarck [the Republic should not have been proclaimed on 4th of September, this was false and was Bismarck's game]."

Thus, it was the inflation of 1926 which caused the disappearance of the last vestiges of the Second Empire rather than the effect of the First World War. *Jeunes filles du monde* became *midinettes,* the *demi-mondaine* became a barmaid or cashier in a café, *l'étudiante,* even if she was a genuine one, acted in films as well, or became an artist's model, or an American's *petite amie,* a dancer, or sometimes a writer's or an artist's wife. The bourgeoisie began to produce all the female types it formerly disapproved. The social classes became indistinguishable; la Bohème entered bourgeois homes. But the people, the *ouvriers,* resisted longest of all, longer than the bourgeois or the aristos and discarded the blouse and the casque long after the *chapeau haut de forme,* the *chapeau melon* and even the *béret* had gone. As well as new America, old White Russia was a strong influence on the literary and artistic Bohème. It is certainly not true that all taxi drivers in the Paris of the early 1920s were Russian Grand Dukes, but the uprooted Russian intelligentsia penetrated in all the traditional categories of French society. It brought bourgeois tastes into the proletarian districts where they settled. White Russia brought Bohemian manners into the Faubourg St Germain, where girls of the St Petersburg aristocracy were still considered marriageable even if they worked as typists, *couturières* or *modistes* in exile. Russian émigrés taught German and English; the French bourgeoisie began to learn foreign languages from them. From ex-Russian Poland, landowners' sons were still sent to Paris to learn French and young ex-subjects of the Habsburgs (Czechs, Croats, etc.) came in much greater numbers than before 1914 to learn the language of the mighty ally of the Little Entente. But these people lived poorly now, in primitive student hotels and earned a living giving lessons, or doing translation work, or becoming tourist guides or assistants in bookshops (the Cité Universitaire with special lodgings for students did not yet exist). Zola's Paris disappeared in the late 1920s and after 1945 no trace of it remained.

I remember in France in the 1920s it did not matter whether you paid in a shop with an English penny, a ten centimes piece, or a ten centimos Spanish one, or in any copper money of the same size from a Latin American state. I still handled a ten centimes piece with the inscription Empire Français and showing the goatee bearded head of Napoleon III. Until about 1926 they were still in circulation some fifty-six years after the defeat of Sedan. The greatly increased inflation of that year (which was halted in the following year by Poincaré) put an end to them. The people, by the way, never said ten centimes, it was called deux sous by everybody. People in France counted in sous; vingt sous for a franc, cent sous for five francs, and although nobody used the old twenty francs gold coin anymore, it frequently happened in shops that the price was called *un Louis* and not twenty francs. I remember buying a new suit in 1927 in a shop near the Hôtel de Ville [the City Hall] and the salesman told me the price was quatre Louis. As late as the early 1960s I heard a French friend of a generation younger than mine mention in conversation a certain sum in sous, to the complete mystification of his own son. Possibly amongst the older simple people and peasants the term is still used, I do not know for sure.

The GI's of 1945–1946 brought to once famous Paris artists' cafés a vulgar tone and style which has not entirely disappeared. The old Montparnasse atmosphere had something discreet about it, despite its poverty (the poverty of those who frequented it) it was never vulgar. Many of the old crowd were Balkan or Danubian peoples, or Poles. Now new blood has come from Scandinavia, Holland and Belgium, although there still survives that old type of English or American voluntary exile – queer painters or writers.

In the late 1920s the good-humoured Montparnasse joke was that it was *le refuge du régime sec d'amérique et des régimes sanglants d'Europe* [the shelter of the dry American and the bloody European regimes]. Much of the old Montparnasse of 1920 to 1939 was bluff, though in many ways it offered a home to the homeless, to the inveterate anti-philistines, to people who hated to breathe the atmosphere of the era, not only of fascism, but of the silly praise of fascism by such people as Emil Ludwig, for example, who earned his bread from the liberal press of Berlin, but travelled to Rome to listen to Mussolini's bombastic commonplaces. I can hardly imagine the person who wants to lead a café life as such. Some hard necessities of life are easier to bear in a town where there is café life. The one point in its favour is that it cheers you up to be alone with a few people who do not mind your talking either nonsense, or a bit more sense than usual, in an intimate circle.

In 1925–1926 I shared a room with Gyula Illyés at 9 rue Budé on the Île Saint-Louis. The dirty old house was probably two hundred and fifty years old in 1925. The room I shared with Illyés was on the first floor; later on, after his departure, I lived on the mezzanine. After the war, my wife and I always used to make a pilgrimage to the house on our visits to Paris. In 1954 or 55, it still had some traces of the old Hôtel St Louis (second class, I suppose in the 1900s, an abode for poor students and young workmen in the 1920s). By 1961, 9 rue Budé had become a complete slum – in fact it was not far from being a slum when I left it in 1929. When we next saw it in 1967, the Île St Louis had been cleaned up, 9 rue Budé had been rebuilt and become a chic restaurant called Le Manche du Gigot, advertising a cuisine Provençale. Somehow on subsequent visits, we never managed to dine 'in my old room', although we always meant to.

On the whole, streets, corners, café terraces and houses were more my friends in Paris than people, for I was much of a solitary stranger, surviving somehow rather aimlessly, by a daily miracle (we often had no money; when we did have some, Gyula and I shared cream cheese and bread for our lunch). There is no corner of this town which does not remind me of something. Paris is my last connection with my youth, and I sometimes feel a sad regret that I cannot discuss the changes in Paris with the people who knew me then: Carlo Rosselli, Robert Desnos and others I will not see any more in this life.

When in later years after the Second World War we sometimes stayed in hotels on the right bank, I never felt a proper Parisian, especially in tourist hotels where, unlike those on the other bank, nobody is a permanent resident. Perhaps the old type of Paris hotel on the Left Bank for poor and lonely residents who only occasionally had a visitor from abroad (and he an American poet, or at least an American drunkard with anarchist views) does not exist anymore. In my time in the 1920s and early 1950s the old Montmartre artist colony was dead and the last of them were pointed out as living museum exhibits when they appeared at Montparnasse. The same fate has probably overtaken Montparnasse today and the hôtel which was in reality not a hotel at all since everybody lived there permanently, is a thing of the past. Except in the very centre of the town, I feel a stranger on the right bank of the Seine.

In the 1970s, I must confess, that I enjoy the sight of this town much less than I used to. There are too many smart modern buildings, huge skyscrapers spoiling the perspectives which were the chief beauty of Paris. In 1926 a popular chanson performed at many carrefours by fellows out of René Clair films said: “Qu’il était beau, mon village, / Mon Paris, notre Paris” [How beautiful my village was / my Paris, our Paris]. By that they probably meant the Paris of 1880, or earlier, the town in which parents stopped their children in order to look at an old gentleman passing by who was Victor Hugo, or at a young lady who was Sarah Bernhardt. These children were still fairly numerous in 1926 when Paris was “mon village”. For them the early era of the 3rd Republic was a romantic dream, and so is the late era of Marianne III [the Third Republic] for my generation. Is every world a dream world from the distance of half a century? Perhaps it is. But we could never be awake if we did not have these dreams.

The Garden of Mankind begins in Paris and north of this city are the lands of banishment. All exiles went from south to north, beginning with Dante, who got as far as Paris. All conquerors went from north to south, the most conquered lands being the Two Sicilies.[136] Other drives in other directions and other forms of Drang brought no luck to the conquerors. This is my very simple Geopolitik. Balzac had a very similar one in his *Pensées et Maximes.*

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[136] The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was created in 1816, by merging the Kingdoms of Sicily and of Naples. It lasted until 1860.

Chapter 9

Action with Károlyi in Paris

To give a precise account of our émigré activities in Paris, I am supplementing the extracts from my Journals with pages taken from my *Italian Memoir* which I wrote in 1975 at the request of my friend Gino Blanco, London correspondent of *Avanti,* commentator at the Italian Section of the BBC and member of the Executive Committee of the Socialist International. He plans to publish this Memoir in Italy, with a selection of my essays.[137]

When Károlyi settled in Paris in 1925, the bitter experience of 1918–1919 had left its mark on him to an extent which surprised and shocked some of his most intimate friends and enthusiastic followers (such as the young man of twenty-three years old that I was in that year). He had obviously lost much of his interest in the problems of his own country and Central Europe in general, seeing the whole future of Europe in terms of a rivalry between America and Russia, that is to say between the capitalist and the socialist system. He did not think that the new states created by the Peace Treaties, especially a much-diminished Hungary, would last long, unless they adopted a sort of international socialist system, on which his ideas were somewhat vague. As a matter of fact, his contacts with the Labour movement only began during the First World War. He had little intellectual grasp of the various branches of socialist theory, since he had little knowledge of socialist writers, and despite knowing Paris since his childhood and speaking the most fluent French that a foreigner can master, he was almost a stranger to the kind of Paris that we had to live in. His Paris was that of his childhood, the bygone Faubourg St Germain and of his family relations, the Princes Polignac, the Comtes Dillon and Albert de Mun. Besides these psychological difficulties, there were the practical difficulties of his place of residence, which I have mentioned.

Then in this same year, 1925, two international scandals drew attention to Hungary and through Hungary to the activities of all the early anti-Fascist émigré colonies then in Paris, and of us, grouped around Károlyi. These Hungarian scandals – the Beniczky affair and the Windischgraetz forgery were a symptom of the growing menace of rearmament and preparations for a new military action in Central Europe, which had been greatly encouraged by Mussolini's seizure of power in Italy. Needless to say, the Italian colony in Paris was at one with us on this issue, though few of the Italian émigrés had our expert knowledge of foreign affairs.

After the publication in Budapest in 1969 of *Számjeltávirat valamennyi magyar királyi követségnek* [Secret Despatches to the Royal Hungarian Legations] edited by Elek Karsai, I probably do not need to do more than give a brief summary here of the facts of the Beniczky Affair. Once the League of Nations loan to Hungary was successfully negotiated, it appeared that the Prime Minister Count István Bethlen was beginning to act on hints received from Geneva, for he suddenly ordered a new enquiry to be set up into the murder in February 1920 of the socialist editor Béla Somogyi [1868–1920], whose body had been fished out of the Danube. The Károlyi group in Paris hoped that this signified that Bethlen was attempting to get rid of the two outstanding personalities of the counter-revolution, Regent Horthy, Gömbös and the military cliques behind them, and with them the obstacle to an improvement in Hungary's international relations.

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[137] The project seems to have come to nothing.

Suddenly Ödön Beniczky, the legitimist Minister of the Interior in 1919–1920 and a militant Catholic Christian Democrat who had presided over the original enquiry in his official capacity, was dispensed from his oath of secrecy under the Official Secrets Act. He gave his evidence in writing (not being questioned or cross-examined, an unusual procedure) and on leaving the magistrate's office, he handed over a typewritten copy of his evidence to a Budapest daily of conservative tendency, which printed it in full. Within an hour, the newspaper was confiscated. In the published evidence, proofs were enumerated that the murderers were, if not organised at the GHQ of Horthy, at least given protection against arrest from that quarter, and Beniczky's orders to arrest the criminals were not obeyed, as the police officers were either intimidated by the military league, or one of them belonged to it themselves.

We received a copy of the confiscated newspaper *Az Újság* in Paris within twenty-four hours. We handed over a copy of a French translation (made by Gyula Illyés and myself) to the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme and to the Italian section also of the Ligue, which was by that time organised in Paris. The full text appeared in several French newspapers and Professor Victor Basch of the Sorbonne, a member of the Central Committee of the Ligue and later Chairman of the French branch, dealt with the matter in the columns of the French daily *L'Ére Nouvelle,* which was close to the then Prime Minister Paul Painlevé, the successor to Édouard Herriot. The Beniczky scandal of the Hungarian counter-revolution once more aroused international interest in Hungarian affairs, for the murder of Béla Somogyi in February 1920 bore a striking resemblance to the more recent murder of [Giacomo] Matteotti [b. 1885] in June 1924, whose corpse had been fished out of the Tiber.

The socialist movement all over Europe began to see some connection between all the counter-revolutionary regimes, the Hungary of Horthy and the Italy of Mussolini having shown this affinity in methods. As all Hungarians no doubt know, Beniczky was accused of betrayal of official secrets and insult to the Head of State, he was submitted to a second, secret trial at which he refused to speak in his own defence and was sentenced to three years in prison. Incidentally, the papers reported that Beniczky inhabited Cell II 28, i.e. second floor, room 28. I was somewhat flattered, for this was my own former cell and so I realised that it was reserved for *Prominente* (as the Nazis called their important prisoners in the Second World War). It was an honour for a young man to be succeeded in his cell by a leading legitimist politician and Chamberlain to the late King Charles IV.

Beniczky was released after six months in prison, as his cell was suddenly needed on account of an even more dazzling scandal.[138] Shortly before the New Year, 1926 two

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[138] Ödön Beniczky (1878–1931) was seriously ill. He lived in poverty after his release, unsuccessfully requesting pension. He shot himself at the Danube, vis-à-vis the Parliament.

Hungarians under cover of diplomatic immunity were arrested by Dutch police in Amsterdam after trying to change a forged French banknote into Dutch guilders. Contrary to international usage, the police opened the sealed diplomatic bags and found thousands of forged one thousand French franc banknotes in them. Within a few days the facts came out. The forged banknotes were to be circulated in the neutral countries and in particular in the Ruhr and the Rhineland (still under French occupation in accordance with the Versailles Treaty) in order to aggravate the crisis in which the French franc found itself. A strict enquiry by the Bethlen Government revealed that the head of the National Security Police, Imre Nádosy, had known about the 'patriotic' forgery and knowingly gave the diplomatic seals to the bags. Moreover, it was revealed that the forgery had been perpetrated in the Cartographic Institute of Budapest, which employed a certain Major László Gerő who was also a member of a secret military league. Furthermore, a great quantity of forged banknotes was stored in the basement of the Palace of Prince Lajos Windichgraetz in Budapest, Mihály Károlyi's family relation and old enemy. (After the First World War, Prince Lajos published a book of reminiscences entitled *From the Red to the Black Prince,* full of attacks on Mihály Károlyi, whose friend he had been in his youth.)[139] Many people think, and I agree with them, that Prince Lajos acted out of stupidity and a perverted sense of patriotism and a certain childish and romantic attraction for secret plots, not from criminal motives, or for personal gain.

We received in Paris direct information from Budapest, with Mihály Károlyi surely being better informed than anybody else on Prince Lajos. It so happened that at the very moment when the Windischgraetz scandal was occupying the front page of the whole European press, the Italian Social Democrat Member of Parliament, Arturo Vella [1886–1943], was in Paris at a conference he was covering for *Avanti* (which was still appearing before Mussolini suppressed Parliament in November of that year). I met him and told him everything about the background to the story, which he posted at once to *Avanti* in Rome. The scandal took such international proportions that we organised an Information Office (9 rue Budé) and for some weeks I wrote in practically every French paper about the case and the background to it.

When the Windischgraetz scandal broke out, Briand, the Prime Minister sent a strong diplomatic protest to Budapest, asking for prompt liquidation of all the secret military leagues. This liquidation never materialised, despite the press campaign which Károlyi, old Diener-Dénes and Pál Szende organised in Paris, with the assistance of two young men, Gyula Illyés and myself. Léon Blum, in a memorable speech in the Chamber of Deputies, insisted that it must materialise, using all the documentation which Illyés and myself compiled, translated and commented upon for him, working day and night for about three or four weeks in our little Press Bureau at 9 rue Budé. Why did it not do so?

The explanation is very simple. The signature of Stresemann in the name of Germany to the Treaty of Locarno was still fresh. Briand was sincerely convinced that this meant the final Franco–German reconciliation and peace. A full and complete enquiry into the background of the ‘patriotic’ forgery of French banknotes in Budapest would have revealed all the secrets of the Black Reichswehr[140] in Germany, all the power controlled by the German underground military leagues, of which General Gömbös, Under-Secretary of State in the Hungarian Ministry of Defence in 1920–1923 and subsequently the leader of the military clique in Parliament, was the agent and promoter, lending Hungarian territory, Hungarian factories, offices, etc. to his German friends. Briand did not think it politically wise to reveal all this after Locarno, and more particularly he knew that Britain would only support French policies on condition that France adhered strictly to what was called in those days the Locarno spirit.

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[139] Windischgraetz published several memoirs, including *Vom roten zum schwarzen Prinzen* (Berlin, 1920), in reference to Count Károlyi (the red prince) and himself (the black prince).

Léon Blum told Diener-Dénes and Szende quite frankly that he did not share this optimism – an optimism which we now know was quadrupled in the British Foreign Office, where reports from the British ambassadors in Berlin – Lord Aberdeen and later Sir Horace Rumbold – made it clear that Locarno meant peace forever, unless the French distrust of Germany was revived. Stresemann had of course nothing to do with the Black Reichswehr, and we dismissed Prince Lajos Windischgraetz’s allegations to the contrary as absurd. Who could disagree when it was said in the French press that the Austro–Hungarian Prince Windischgraetz “was not quite at the top of the queue when Almighty God was giving out brains to his waiting children on earth?” Certainly, Mihály Károlyi did not, long before 1926 their friendship turned to bitter enmity, as can only happen in family relations.

I am sure that Stresemann did not play false. The followers of Maurras were definitely wrong in thinking this. Stresemann was a German patriot, a frank disciple of Bismarck, who believed in the necessity of a strong Germany, but was sober-minded and clear-sighted enough to welcome the spirit of Locarno and an opportunity for Franco–German reconciliation. The trouble was that his position in Germany was not as strong as the British and Briand believed it to be. The Black Reichswehr as well as the official Reichswehr intrigued all the time against him, the Hugenberg press in Berlin spread the most incredible and unscrupulous calumnies against him, no doubt hastening his death in 1929 at the early age of fifty-two. The secret military organisations were only waiting for an opportunity to come out into the open, with a fully armed Germany imposing her will on a disarmed England and a not very strong France (despite appearances), and to destroy Poland, and with Poland, the French system of alliances in Eastern Europe. In Munich during these years Haufstängl[141] was already making active propaganda for the Führer, Adolf Hitler.

All this we knew, and we saw very clearly in the 1920s. Later, in the 1930s, we had some right to think that if we could have brought down the Hungarian regime in 1926 after the crowning scandal of the forged French banknotes, following upon so many other scandals and iniquities, we might have been able to save Europe from the Second World

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[140] An extra-legal paramilitary organisation, dissolved in 1923.

[141] Correctly spelled Ernst Hanfstaengl (1887–1975) was Hitler’s intimate but fell out of his favour later. He was taken a prisoner after his emigration to Canada. He gave invaluable information to Roosevelt’s staff on Hitler and his inner circle. Menczer misspells the name later as well, these are corrected.

War. History is full of 'ifs'. The true tense in historical writing is the conditional rather than the past tense, I said in *Új Europa* in my review of Gordon Brook-Shepherd's book *The Last Habsburg* in 1972.[142] Every political party which played a role in its country's destiny has its own 'if'.

Yet there was a fatal weakness, a major spoiler, so to say of our case and this was – I am still sorry to admit it, but I must – Mihály Károlyi. His failure in 1918–1919 was certainly a tragic one, but nobody, not even a stronger man than Károlyi, could have succeeded in that situation. Despite this *débâcle,* the prestige which Károlyi had enjoyed in France and in all the allied countries during the 1914–1918 war might have been restored. His reputation rested on the fact that he had during the First World War opposed the Austro–Hungarian government's total submission to German interests, or alleged interests, as envisaged by the General Staff, led on the lunatic fringe by General Ludendorff. Károlyi was clear-sighted enough in those days to see that Austria–Hungary had not a single war aim which was directed against France or England; that neither England nor France had a single objective which was to our detriment; that without the Russian alliance France would never have gone to war; that after the first shock was over in 1915, Austria–Hungary could have started action for peace. There were several opportunities to do so: either early in 1915 shortly after the withdrawal of Russian troops from Galicia at the end of the summer of that year, or in the course of 1916. The collapse of Russia, the defeat of Serbia and Romania made our further participation in the war senseless. The unrestricted U-boat warfare, which brought the United States into the war, was no concern of Hungary; the last offensive of Ludendorff against Paris in the spring of 1918 was clearly against our wishes. Every sensible Hungarian and some Austrians felt this, including King Charles and Count Ottokar Czernin, Austro–Hungarian Foreign Minister from 1916–1918, but the Károlyi group in Parliament was more outspoken than anybody else in Budapest and said so explicitly. The French knew this and did not forget it, neither did the men at the Quai d'Orsay [the Foreign Office], who had information on Hungary from other sources than the silly and unworthy gossip that was spread by the book *Quand Israël est Roi* by the brothers Jean and Jérôme Tharaud (who fortunately wrote better books before and after this one).[143]

The case we had to make out for Hungary was a clear one. We had to reconstruct, in new forms and with a new content, the former Habsburg Empire which had fallen victim to the war and the German alliance, into a timely and democratic federation. The peace and the safe balance of Europe needed a central power to exist between Germany and Russia, two expanding forces which were out of the power game after 1918, but certainly not forever. A central power within a Danubian federation was needed, comprising about a hundred million of people from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Black Sea, consisting of Poles, Czechs, Austrians, Hungarians, Romanians, Serbs and Croats, perhaps even Bulgarians and Greeks.

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[142] Weybreight and Talley, 1929.

[143] See previously. The English edition is provided by Wentworth Press, 2018.

Yet Károlyi fell increasingly under Communist influence and forgot the people for whom he might have been, or should have been, the spokesman. Somehow, he closed his eyes and his ears. It was obvious that German industry had captured the Russian market, that German technicians and scientists were working in Russian factories at inventions which were useful for German rearmament, that German Air Force officers were trying out their new planes in Russia, and that Stalin was cooperating in these efforts, seeing his only chance for a world revolution in a second World War, which only Germany could wish for.

Detestable as Gömbös and his new patron Mussolini in Rome were, Hungary and even Italy were nothing in the late 1920s, in comparison with the opportunities which Russia under Stalin offered for a secret German rearmament – not to the Black Reichswehr, but to the official Reichswehr General Staff, which sent its best men to Moscow. The German Foreign Minister who opened the gates of Russia to the Germans was Walther Rathenau. He was murdered by the secret military league, it is true, but the German ambassadors to Moscow continued and extended his policy. These men, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and Count von der Schulenburg were every bit as aristocrats of the old regime as Károlyi was. But they cultivated Russian friendship for German interests. They represented a Germany which was bound to become once more a great power.

Mihály Károlyi, on the other hand, was pro-communist for ideological reasons, like Beatrice and Sidney Webb in England, for publicity reasons like Bernard Shaw, for silly reasons like so many English (Mayfair Club) intellectual snobs of that generation – not for any reasons connected with Hungary, or the Danubian nations, for whom he might have been the spokesman. I do, however, admit that blindness and deafness in this respect were fairly widespread and not confined to Károlyi. Member of the Reichstag, Franz Kunstler [1888–1942], a Social Democrat, made amazing revelations in 1928 concerning the secret arms supplies of the Reichswehr; Carl von Ossietzky [1889–1938] (one of my editors later on in Berlin) a radical democrat, later murdered by the Nazis, made others in 1930 and went to prison for doing so.[144] Cecil F. Melville, an English newspaper correspondent in Berlin for many years, published a book called *The Russian Face of Germany* in 1932, i.e. a year before Hitler came to power, in which he gave hundreds of facts concerning the 'black' and 'feldgrau' Reichswehr's Russian connections.[145]

No notice whatsoever was taken of all this. The left-wing parties swallowed Stalin's purges, they swallowed even more readily the Russian help towards German rearmament. All this was for the greater glory of socialism, and it ultimately led to the Second World War. My explanation of the events of the world scene of those days has been a long one, but after all, this is why I did not go back to Budapest for forty-nine years.

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[144] Strictly speaking, von Ossietzky died in prison hospital due to tuberculosis and other consequences of imprisonment.

[145] Cecil F. Melville (1932): *The Russian Face of Germany. An Account of the Secret Military Relations between the German and Soviet–Russian Governments.* Wishart. 'Feldgrau' – literally field grey – the official colour of regular German military, in opposition to the illegal black uniform.

Chapter 10

Károlyi, József Diener-Dénes, Gyula Illyés

In Katinka Károlyi's *Memoirs,* one of her references to me must be due to an error of memory. She says that I was Károlyi's permanent chess partner at the Café de la Coupole, Montparnasse. This is not true. I played chess once or twice with him, but he was a player so superior to me that handed him over to better partners, thinking that it was not very amusing for a champion like him to play with a poor partner like me. I knew the rules of the game, but I never had the patience to sit for two hours to work out a good move. She recalls that we had our meetings of the Club de la Rive Gauche in La Coupole; La Rotonde; sometimes in the Café Voltaire at the Odéon and also every now and then at the Closerie des Lilas. Our chairmen were Robert Dell [1865–1940], correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* and Francis Delaisi [1873–1947], the French economist. Our frequent guests were Constantin Trenka (for some time First Secretary at the Legation of Bulgaria in Paris, then a refugee from the Tzankov régime) Pál Szende, József Diener-Dénes, the Nitti brothers Vincenzo, Giuseppe and Frederigo (sons of Francesco Nitti, the former Prime Minister of Italy before Mussolini's time) George Slocombe [1894–1963] (the Paris correspondent of *The Daily Herald*) S. Labin (correspondent of the Bucharest *Dimineaţa*.) Every now and then we had Freddy [Frederick Augustus] Voigt [1892–1957] (passing through Paris but living in Berlin as the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in Germany), Robert Desnos the poet, Georges Pioch [1873–1953] (the music critic of many papers, the friend of Anatole France and I think one of his biographers), Joseph Roth the Austrian poet and novelist (author of *The Radetzky March* – a novel which was and still is, very popular in Western Europe – Marcell Vértes,[146] the Hungarian cartoonist and many others. The ladies who were hostesses, or assistant hostesses in the separate room reserved for La Rive Gauche were Katinka Károlyi, Mrs. Slocombe, (Russian by birth, British by marriage) Luigia Nitti (old Nitti's daughter), Madame Constantin Trenka, Madame Labin and her daughter Gina (later the wife of Jean Bénichou; then a Normalien and afterwards a professor at the Collège Stanislas) and some others. Sometimes when our dinners ended early, Károlyi stayed behind to play chess in another part of the café and I stayed behind too, to read quietly in a corner, alone at a table, or else to have a quiet chat with Pál Szende, who lived in a Montparnasse hotel nearby and who for some reason disliked going to bed before midnight.

Apart from the Rive Gauche dinners, I often met Mihály Károlyi in the Montparnasse cafés, but this was for various reasons, never in order to play chess. Katinka Károlyi being a rare visitor to Montparnasse, saw me there sometimes in her husband's company, but of course more often in their flat, for some time at the Boulevard Raspail, later at the Place du Panthéon, finally (after my return to Paris from Berlin in 1933) at the Avenue Loevendhal, and later still in London, on the eve of the war. The Károlyis made the Paris–London trip several times a year (their daughter Eva being at school there and later on their son Adam training at an RAF school in Southampton) so that my contacts with them were fairly regular and close for twenty years, in Paris and in London from 1925 until the end of the Second World War. Naturally I saw him more often than I did her; possibly she did not always know the reasons for our meetings. (He often consulted me before publishing something in a review, he often gave me some briefing for my articles in *Le Soir* or in *Le Populaire,* in *Paris Matinal,* or in the weekly *La Lumière* which were my papers in those days, besides the *Vienna Zentraleuropäische Pressekorrespondenz.* But he never 'briefed' me on chess!

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[146] Marcell Vértes (1895–1961), cartoonist, stage designer and graphic artist, was also an emigrant in Paris, made a successful career in Paris and New York.

It was largely owing to József Diener-Dénes that I became connected with Léon Blum's *Le Poulaire* and Frossard's *Le Soir.* I was also principal correspondent on Central European affairs in *Le Quotidien* from 1926–1928. This was the paper founded by Edouard Herriot for the elections of 1924 which led to the victory of the Cartel de Gauche, already mentioned. In the mid-1920s Diener-Dénes worked in the office of *Le Populaire* and had quite a serious influence within the Socialist International. His relations with Károlyi when he was the latter's Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office ceased to be friendly within a few weeks of a common term of office and good relations were never entirely restored in the exile they shared in Paris in the 1920s. When I knew Diener-Dénes he was very bald, slightly short-sighted, with a piercing glance behind his glasses and his hearing had begun to deteriorate. He was what the Germans call a 'polyhistor'. I have known few people in my lifetime who had more varied interests, or a wider culture.

He was a curious sort of socialist – too fond of humanistic culture to be a revolutionary and at heart he was even a great-Austrian. The queer fact of this relation of a socialist author to the Belvedere no doubt needs an explanation. Francis Ferdinand saw the principal danger for the Habsburg Monarchy in the nationalist movements, including the Great German party in Austria. Thus, he welcomed the two international movements which, since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1907, had come to the fore: the clerical black Christian Socialists and the red Social Democrats. The head of the military cabinet in the Belvedere, Col. Brosch von Aarenau,[147] very tactfully and skilfully established contacts with both new parties, the black and the red one, for the archduke and advised the heir to the throne in a new way. He foresaw the emergence of a Labour movement capable of governing Austria in a coalition with the clericals. No doubt this sounded very strange in the early years of this century, but it became a reality later, after the First as well as the Second World War. [Diener-Dénes] had acted as advisor to Archduke Francis Ferdinand's office at the Belvedere and kept in close touch with Father von Galen, Francis Ferdinand's famous Benedictine *éminence grise,*[148] with Prince Aloys

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[147] Alexander Brosch Edler von Aarenau (1870–1914) was adjutant and intimate advisor to Francis Ferdinand. According to reports, he actively sought heroic death after the war started, which was granted to him.

[148] Augustinus von Galen, OSB (Graf, 1870–1949) was indeed the confessor of Francis Ferdinand, but he also fulfilled various public functions in the Church.

Liechtenstein [1846–1920] and other Austrian Christian Socialists. He felt a great-Austrian hatred for the liberal Magyar oligarchy; his heart was with the dynastic, clerical and great-Austrian gentlemen of the Golden Fleece and at the same time with the socialist workers. There was no room in it for the Hungarian liberals and the Magyar nationalism of the 1900s, which he abhorred. The days when he had plotted with Fr. von Galen and Prince Liechtenstein to overthrow the old liberal party in favour of both the Christian Socialists and the Labour movement were over when I knew him, but not his passion for writing memoranda and his conspiratorial habits. I do not know how many plans he made for the Quai d'Orsay. Sometimes he appealed to me to improve his French style and to supply him with facts and documents for an Appendix to his memoranda on Central European affairs. These must have saved the officials of the Quai d'Orsay a lot of work, for his points of view on current affairs were interesting and well-documented. His recurrent conclusion was the inevitable triumph of a Western democratic socialism. He was strongly anti-Prussian on the whole and thought that German socialism was on the wrong track and that England and France were on the right one. He wrote a book in 1926 or 27: *La Hongrie, son oligarchie et son peuple*[149] with a Preface by Léon Blum and this book, together with Jászi's *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary,* formed the best writing which the later Károlyi group produced.

I remember a funny story about the political planning of Diener-Dénes. A party comrade of old days who had emigrated to the United States once came to visit József Diener-Dénes in the Paris hotel where he and his wife occupied a bed-sitting room (which was also his office) and a kitchen. On the table there was a memorandum to the Quai d'Orsay, a personal letter to Beneš, another to Léon Blum, an article for a German review and books, newspapers and reviews in three or four languages, and an immense amount of notes, manuscripts, etc. József Diener-Dénes, in his inimitable Slovak accent turned to our American comrade (a man of 45 to 50, but always addressed as 'young man') and said: "Believe me, young friend, it is hard to govern Europe from a little hole like this!"

The last time that I saw him was on a Paris boulevard halfway between Montmartre and the editorial office of *Le Populaire,* which was not far from the Place de Clichy at the time. It was in 1933, a few weeks after Hitler and the Reichstag fire. He asked me about Eduard Bernstein who had died shortly before Hitler came to power and asked whether I knew him personally. I said no, but that I had been to his funeral, which was also, so to say, the funeral of German Social Democracy (December 1932). This was one of my last, if not the last manifestation of the old spirit of the party which I still supported in those days, though with many critical qualifications. József Diener-Dénes turned towards me: "Tell somewhere one day, that an old veteran of International Socialism told you that Eduard Bernstein was the only brain in German socialism since the death of Marx and Engels and he was not a Marxist!" I went on to say that I had begun to wonder what socialism really was. My old friend took up his familiar didactic pose: "Socialism is still the same thing you heard about when you were a schoolboy, some fifteen years ago. It is not primarily a sympathy with working class aims. It is first of all an insight into the direction of history, an acceptance of prophecy. History never moves in a wrong direction. The future always brings retributions and rewards for the past and the present…" And so on.

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[149] Correctly: *La Hongrie : oligarchie, nation, peuple.* Paris: Rivière, 1927.

I remember our dialogue so well because it was so characteristic of the old socialist school. There was a religious and prophetic sense in these men – in Lassalle for example and Marx and many others who were near to their ideas. It was in the disguise of economic science and other positivist philosophies, but it was prophetic insight of a sort that they preached.

Between our Paris period of 1925–1926 and our reunion in his house on the Rózsadomb [Budapest district] in 1972, Gyula Illyés kept his typically Hungarian face much as it was in his youth, though he is somewhat bald, and his remaining hair is white. Laci Wessely[150] was there too, one of my closest Paris *copains,* whom I had last met in Berlin in 1932, six or seven months before Hitler came to power at the time of the fall of Brüning and the coming to power of Franz von Papen. Apparently, he and Illyés often discuss our Paris years, memories of 9 rue Budé on the Île St Louis – and last but not least the girls of those days: Marie-Louise, Paulette, Barbara, Annette, Hilda, Margot… Three young men in four years had many girlfriends.

Illyés has kept his quiet sort of humour, his sound and balanced judgement on men and things, his talent to see things from many sides. As an old revolutionary, he agreed with me that negations and rebellions were never enough. His love and understanding for the peasant people of his village, his five years among French authors and scholars in Paris, his study of French literature – these he considers to be the positive side of his career.

At a PEN Congress in Yugoslavia in 1974 I discussed with the Swiss Romansh writer Andri Peer [1921–1985] where new ideas – in literature, or art, or political history – really begin: with the people, or with an élite. He told me that he was interested in Hungary as a folklorist. He told me he was confirmed in his view that they begin with the people by Gyula Illyés, whom he met abroad and visited in Hungary. Upon this, I remarked as a well-informed witness that Illyés spent the decisive five years of his life (1921–1926) in France. His years in Paris, his French reading, his personal French contacts in literary circles, his trips to France in later years in the 1930s and again in the post-Second World War years, occur again and again in almost everything he wrote and published in the last half-century. He is considered by many Hungarians to be already a classic – I am not going to contradict them – but all serious critics and literary historians who know his poetry and his prose would, and always will, classify my old friend Gyula Illyés as an outstanding Hungarian *francisant* in the same way that in French literature such men as Valéry, Larbaud or Jules Supervielle[151] are *hispanisants* or Élie Faure an *italienisant.*

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[150] László (Laci) Wessely (1904–1978), writer and translator, member of the Galilei Circle, imprisoned after 1919. He emigrated to Germany, France, Belgium, returned to Hungary, was arrested again, and transferred to the Soviet Union where he worked as a cadre until he was arrested again. He survived and returned to Hungary once again, where he held various positions in the literary industry.

[151] Jules Supervielle (1884–1960) was a French–Uruguayan poet, nominated for the Nobel Prize several times.

I think Illyés is mainly a lyric poet, though he wrote at least one good historical play,[152] he is a novelist, he is a highly intelligent critic and literary scholar. Perhaps the best element of his art as a novelist is his intelligent use of irony, his healthy disposition to grotesque humour, his safe sense of good taste which he probably owes to his French masters and models; finally, his talent for telling his personal experiences in a witty way, not always adhering to strictly factual truth, but often saying on himself and on his contemporaries something very essential.

When I met Gyula Illyés in Paris early in 1925 (after three and a half years of separation since our last meeting in Budapest late in 1921) he told me of his French experiences. In his first two or three years in France (about 1922–1924) he wandered a lot across the country, taking all sorts of casual jobs which were easily available in those days for young foreigners, as the labour force had been much reduced by the immense French losses in the years 1914–1918, and the new working generation had not yet had the time to grow up in the first few years of the post-war era. Gyula lived somewhere in the region of Tours for a short while on a peasant farm. An old peasant woman looked after him very affectionately and in a very maternal manner. She was, according to his account, somewhat astonished that an exotic young stranger such as a Hungarian was not dark-skinned, brown, black, or yellow, but she was still more astonished to hear that there are foreigners who have a totally strange and incomprehensible language. Gyula was already a fluent speaker in French, having learned the language in the upper forms of his Budapest school, but in order to read his French books he needed every now and then a Hungaro–French dictionary. He had some difficulty in explaining to the old peasant woman what such a dictionary was for. Gyula's comment on this episode was the following: "This is true internationalism and even true Christianity. That old woman was convinced that all mankind speaks the same language and understands them all. That God spoke French went without saying for her."

I last saw Gyuszi [a nickname of Gyula] in Paris in July 1926, I wrote my last letter to him in 1934 when someone visiting Hungary went to see him with a letter from me. (My correspondence with Hungary had to be very discreet, on account of the Horthy secret police. Even my personal letters to my mother and sister were sometimes opened before delivery.) Then, quite by chance when telephoning Pál Tábori in September 1971 to ask him whether he had met Illyés at the PEN Congress in Dublin, to which I had not gone, I heard that Gyula was staying for a few days with the Táboris in London. So, we had a long telephone conversation as it was not possible for him to come out to the country to see us, while we ourselves were on the eve of our departure for a trip to America. He expressed the hope that I had remembered our old pact before falling in love with Marjorie. The story of this is as follows. Gyula's then girlfriend in Paris was Barbara Sinkó, a Bácska [part of old Hungary] girl, a student at the École des Beaux Arts and sister of Ervin Sinkó, a writer and artist. (Much later on, Sinkó wrote a book summing up the experience of our generation in East Europe, which created a sensation because it was published under the regime of Tito, despite an anti-communist tendency.)[153] I was moderately fond of Hilda Rubenstein [1904–1997], a gifted German girl, a painter, writer and musician. Barbara was tall and dark with an elegant figure and an original face without being a beauty, and she was somewhat of a feminist, disliking Gyula's views on love (he sometimes exhibited his male superiority, he was not an advocate of sex in the fashion of today, but an ambitious young man who was not so convinced that women are, or ought to be, our intellectual equals). Hilda was tiny, with lively eyes and fine hands and feet, good-looking without being a beauty. She often painted self-portraits showing the boyish hairstyle that was fashionable in those days. She drew a sketch of Mihály Károlyi for a newspaper and she painted a portrait of me which was exhibited in her hometown of Cologne. (Where is that portrait now?) She was also somewhat difficult to deal with, being vain and oversensitive. Gyula's German was somewhat halting, as was her French, so that there were linguistic obstacles to good relations between them. One day Gyula made a not too pleasant remark about Hilda, I retorted with a critical remark about Barbara. We almost quarreled, until Gyula made the following proposition: "I tell you what we do. We make a pact. Henceforth, we will always fall in love with the same girl. That will stop us from quarreling." Upon this, we ordered a drink.

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[152] In fact, Illyés wrote several plays, including historical ones – which of them Menczer read and considered 'good' remains unclear.

At the end of this telephone conversation, I told him that I wanted to see Hungary once more in my life but did not know if I would be welcome. "In our house", he said, "we could not have more honoured or more welcome guests." And so it has proved on each of our visits, when we have had happy evenings enjoying Flóra Illyés's exquisite dinners and eternally reminiscing, when not discussing contemporary issues.

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[153] Ervin Sinkó (1898–1967) had an extraordinary career. He was involved in the revolutions on various posts, including military ones, representing and pursuing humanist ideals. He lived in Vienna, Paris, Moscow, Zagreb, Sarajevo, participating in the partisan wars during the Second World War. But he was a fine novelist as well, and a surprisingly open critic of Bolshevism (in 1920, he became a Tolstoian Christian anarchist for a while). Since he wrote several books on the revolutions and their aftermath, it is not clear which of them Menczer has here in mind.

Chapter 11

Friends and Companions

Two Christmases I spent in Paris stand out in my memory. The first was in 1925, the first in my life when I was alone. At all previous Christmases I was still in the family, or at least at a party in some community to which I belonged, such as the young men of the Schönbrunn Studentheim. The second was in 1926 or 27; I went with Attila József to the Midnight Mass at St Sulpice with other young Hungarians. This was the first Midnight Mass of my life, but to be frank, I cared little for the company and little even for poor Attila. Some poems of his which were published in the 1950s in the Paris *Ahogy Lehet* by Sándor Rezek OSB[154] I like, but at the time when I knew him, he had not yet written them and what he wrote in those days did not always appeal to me. Incidentally, Father Rezek and his group often talked in the late 1940s and the 1950s of having a commemorative plaque put on the house where Attila lived, but I do not think anything ever came of this intended tribute,[155] especially since the group ceased to exist, to the best of my knowledge, when Father Rezek left for Brazil about 1960. (For about ten years I was very close to Fr. Rezek and published regularly in his review. It may amuse Hungarian scholars doing research in Paris to know that I was the 'Mihály Zenghy' who intrigued the Hungarian colony there with my *Political Alphabet.*)[156]

In 1972 I was surprised to see a huge statue of Attila in the main square of Veszprém and a Youth Hostel named after him. I think he would have preferred to be honoured by a little bust in a Budapest park, such as poets have in the Jardin du Luxembourg. I knew him well enough to be sure of this. Personally, I liked him but did not think he was a very great poet and to my mind he was even less of a great man, but he had a sense of humour and a sense of proportion, a certain Bohemian charm and good humour, despite his tragic end by suicide in 1937 at the age of only thirty-two. He was happy enough in the company of a few friends and not even his poverty ever compelled him to go to a youth hostel. Of course, in view of his suicide and later reputation, I am very sorry now that I did not take his talent more seriously and that I destroyed the few letters I had from him. I originally kept these letters, written to me in Paris when he returned to Hungary, but I had to destroy them together with other personal papers and belongings when I had to leave Berlin in March 1933. How could I guess in 1933 that I should never see Attila again, when he was only twenty-eight in that year?

Lola Hatvany told me in Budapest in 1972 (over the telephone, we could not meet for lack of time) that Attila spoke very often of me to her and always referred to me as a "dear and close friend". To be quite frank, while I liked Attila's personality well enough, I did not like much of the poetry he wrote because I did not think it showed any evolution. He started as a gifted young man of twenty and when he was thirty, he was not much more mature, so, that his 20-ish mood became a pose. I was also alienated by the hysteria of his admirers when he committed suicide, though I tried to see only the best in him. Some of his rhymes are witty, charming, refreshing. But he did not have a great poetic imagination in my opinion; he did not invent a single character who would live on in our memories, he did not give any subtle or valid interpretation of the age he lived in, of the Hungarian scene, of Hungarian history and of early twentieth century Budapest.

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[154] Román Sándor Rezek (1916–1986), émigré theologian, poet, translator, editor; translated Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's writings into Hungarian.

[155] It did, in 1967. For some reason Menczer was ignorant of this. The plaque was renovated in 2005. It is to be found at 4 Rue du Vieux-Colombier, Paris, 75006.

[156] *Politikai alapelvek I–IV,* in *Ahogy Lehet*, 1956 (in four parts).

As to the way he told his own story, I thought him not always sincere. His father ran off to America, leaving his mother behind with three children when Attila was only three years old. The father lived a gay life in America with another woman, while his mother lived a poor life in Budapest, and this made him turn to communism as a remedy against such injustice. Attila's sister Lucy[157] became secretary to a Hungarian barrister who eventually married her. Apparently (I heard this from Pál Ignotus) Lucy was at first ashamed of having such a proletarian little brother. She posed as a lady. Attila was allowed to go to her parties for poor children which she organised, provided he addressed her as Madame, gave her no kiss other than on the hand and told nobody that he was Madame's brother. All the same, the brother-in-law paid for Attila's education and as soon as his literary talent was discovered by Lajos Hatvany, and he began to frequent Lucy's drawing room (so full of young celebrities around 1930). Lucy took an interest in her brother, organised his celebrity and tried to exploit his writing both socially and commercially; and continued to do so after his suicide. All this is a good and sad subject for a novel. Lola told me that in his last few years Attila was hardly normal and "spoke all the time about Freud and Marx, not even realising that Freudism and Marxism are incompatible".

In Paris Attila was a contributor to the three numbers of the review *Esprit Nouveau* of Michel Seuphor in 1928 (I shall speak of Seuphor in a moment.) I remember that I made the rough translations from the Hungarian, which Seuphor put into French rhymes with my assistance. When I sent a copy of my *Commentary on Hungarian Literature* (written in 1953–1954 and published in Cologne and Detroit in 1956 and expanded into a book from my original article in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1954)[158] to Seuphor, he assured me that he had read the pages dealing with Hungarian authors he had known personally in our old Paris days: [the poet Lajos] Kassák [1887–1967], Illyés, Attila József. I wonder whether even the Bibliothéque Nationale possesses that short-lived review as a bibliographical curiosity.

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[157] Jolán József (1899–1950) married Ödön Makkai using the name 'Lucie Lippi'. She also worked as a journalist. Her rising from the proletariat by way of finding successful and helpful husbands helped Attila József as well; the story could indeed be a subject of a novel.

[158] See the Introduction.

Michel Seuphor[159] (equals Orpheus, a good Montparnasse joke) was in my youth a surrealist poet of Montparnasse, later a Catholic philosopher, abstract artist and art critic of some fame. He is a Flemish Belgian by birth, but a Parisian established in Paris since the late 1920s and with a charming French wife Suzanne. I met him again for the first time after the war in 1950 in his home and in our home in London. I liked him when we were both young, but I could not bear surrealism, Dadaism, etc., in which he was interested, not even as a Montparnasse joke. As such, it was spoilt by calculating ambition and sordid speculation that scandal would bring literary fame and also by all the pretentious nonsense that was seriously propounded in favour of these schools and sects. Trissotin and Vadius are not improved in my eyes when instead of the courtly language of the salons, they make an ill-mannered noise in cafés. I am not of course including my old friend Seuphor in these strictures; he has serious literary talent, as his autobiographical books such as *La Maison Claire* published about 1950, prove.[160]

It so happened that in 1977 when our friend Dr Ilona Fodor was in Paris on a research scholarship, and we were breaking our journey for a couple of days in Paris en route for Provence where we were to stay with French friends, we went to an exhibition of Seuphor's abstract art together. Ilona had recently seen Seuphor, who she said had told her a lot about our Paris days and spoken appreciatively of our old association and our post-war meetings in Paris and London, but at that moment he was in America, so I could only sign the Visitor's Book with a friendly message. His catalogue spoke much of the mystique of *le carré* and *le cercle,*[161] which I think Ilona understood better than I did.

So it was in Paris that I began my career as a literary critic when I made the translations of Attila József's poems for Seuphor's *Esprit Nouveau.* Before that I only wrote on politics, or at the most on philosophy connected with politics. From *Esprit Nouveau* I went round about 1930 to *Sagesse* edited by Fernand Marc [poet, 1900–1979] and Jean Hytier [novelist, professor of literature, 1899–1983] and Jean Follain [poet, 1903–1971], (Fernand Marc's pretty sister Gaby acted as secretary) and which survived for three or four years, if I remember correctly. I summarised during the first year of its existence two or three causeries at meetings of *Sagesse,* on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at the Forte Rouge in a café whose name I have forgotten. I also did a few book reviews. I introduced the poet Robert Desnos to the Sagesse group, but he did not want to join us, I cannot remember any more for what reason. The end of *Sagesse* came in 1933–1934. Fernand Marc, who had been formerly completely unpolitical, suddenly became a communist sympathiser and I subsequently lost sight of him. At any rate, *Sagesse* went to pieces over this, especially as I (freshly arrived from Nazi Berlin and embarked on my second Paris period 1933–1934) made a strongly worded criticism of a document on Germany which *Sagesse* had issued, signed by poets and writers, which was partly right in its attitude, but worded in a silly phraseology such as French capitalism and imperialism being responsible for the Versailles Treaty. Jean Follain, Hyttier and a few others of the group shared my view.

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[159] Fernand Berckelaers (1901–1999), abstract painter, critic, Mondian's biographer, philosopher of art, used the name Seuphor as an anagram of Orpheus; he did convert to Catholicism – like Cocteau – partly under the influence of Jacques Maritain.

[160] Trissotin and Vadius are characters in Molière's comedy *The Learned Ladies.*

[161] Cercle et Carré was a group of abstract painters, but Menczer also uses the 'circle' and the 'square' as a reference to abstract art.

The two latter personalities may interest my readers. Follain soon achieved considerable fame, both as one of the younger writers and poets of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and as a curiosity in his civilian profession of the Bar. He specialised as counsel for the defence for petty thieves, whose stories were either moving, or amused the public because they were *très parisien* cases (such as underworld settlements of accounts concerning a girl in the story, whose name both sides, injured in the fighting, refused by agreement to name). Hyttier left Paris round about 1929 for Teheran, where he went to teach French to the later Reza Shah when he was still Crown Prince, the same Reza Shah Pahlavi whose throne, at the very moment of copying these words in January 1979, has fallen.[162] I last heard of Hyttier in 1945, when he was an official at the Ministry of Education, author of a commentary on Pascal and editor of a high-brow review founded in Algiers in 1942 and transferred to Paris in 1945, where it did not live very long.

András Hevesi, my old school friend whom I mentioned in Chapter 2, came to Paris to work on his thesis in the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1926–1927 and I met him quite often. His father Sándor Hevesi tried to keep his official position at the National Theatre despite his former leftist reputation, which did not do him much good under the Horthy régime. Thus, András was slightly embarrassed to meet me on the terrace of the Dôme, frequented by so many Hungarians who knew us both; by 1927 András himself was a civil servant under Horthy, as a librarian at the National Museum. Nevertheless we often met, but at other Paris cafés. András was by then a highly intelligent, finely cultured and brilliant literary gentleman, somewhat over-witty, malicious and paradoxical. He liked me, but he hated the Károlyi crowd and each time I met him he tackled me and teased me over my then friends. His views were very near to those of the Action Française, and he thought sometimes of emigrating and making a French literary career for himself, perhaps by first getting to the Hungarian Institute in Paris, of which Miklós Ajtay was then the General Secretary.

About 1930 András wrote a remarkable, somewhat autobiographical novel,[163] took a French degree in addition to his Hungarian one and wrote a number of essays on French literature. It was through our old friendship that I met Pál Ignotus and László Cs. Szabó[164] whom I knew better in later years in Berlin and London. One of András's troubles in his French contacts was that he was often confused with André Hevesy,[165] the brother of Pál, who lived in Paris and had a Belgian wife. The Hevesi and the Hevesy families were not related, they both produced an André who was a man of letters specialising in French studies and how to distinguish between them? Finally, the solution was that when they wrote in Hungarian, one signed Andor Hevesy, the other András Hevesi, but in French both remained André, despite the twenty years or so of difference in age which was not noticed by their many French acquaintances.

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[162] The clearest indication of the date when Menczer was finishing this manuscript.

[163] *Párisi eső* [Rain in Paris], first edition in 1934, and it was published several times. The novel is indeed equal to the best French novels in the thirties.

[164] László Szabó Cs. (1905–1984), essayist, critic, editor, one of the most erudite scholars of his generation.

[165] André de Hevesy (1882–1945) was an art historian and collector. He also wrote a book entitled *L'Agonie d'un Empire. L'Autriche-Hongrie. Moeurs et Politique.* Paris: Perrin, 1923. Menczer fails to mention this.

In 1938 András fought a duel with a pro-Nazi editor and then he left Hungary at the same time as Tibor Eckhardt and the other pro-Allied politicians. He volunteered for the French Army in 1939 and I had always thought that he was killed in action. But much later, László Cs. Szabó found out that he died early in July 1940 in a military hospital in Alsace from an illness contracted while serving in the French Army.[166] He found András's name in a list of those registered as *Morts pour la France.* He was only thirty-nine.

Other French acquaintances I made in my second Paris period came through the Foyer de la Paix, Boulevard Raspail near Montparnasse, directed by Marc Sangnier, where I took part in discussions on German and Central European affairs. Through Marc Sangnier I was able to make contact with French Christian Democrats and some sections of the French Socialist Party. It was at the Foyer de la Paix that I made the acquaintance of Georges Bidault [1899–1983], then editor of *L'Aube,* without realising he was going to become a Prime Minister of France and Foreign Secretary after the war.

Marc Sangnier [1873–1950] was a professor at the Faculty of Law in a provincial university for some years, a Member of the Parliament and a Catholic Christian Democrat of leftish views and was a particularly strong advocate of a Franco–German rapprochement at the time of Briand and Stresemann. The Foyer de la Paix was founded for the benefit of young foreigners who came to Paris and its main aim was to encourage personal contacts between young Frenchmen and young Germans. A lecture which I remember very clearly was given at the Foyer by Freddy Voigt, the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent in Berlin, on the Hitler phenomenon, with Madame Germanie Malaterre-Sellier [1889–1967] in the Chair, at that time a well-known personality in political movements, a liberal Christian Democrat like Marc Sangnier. Voigt was an excellent speaker in French and German, although everything that he wrote was in English.

Finally, in striking contrast to our café and club meetings, was the radical salon of Madame Aline Ménard-Dorian [1850–1929], the great lady of the Third Republic, which was possibly the last survival of this ancient French institution. I was introduced by Marie-Louise Levinson, a journalist who worked for the women's weekly *Minerva.* She was French and born in Paris, but of Russian–Jewish origin and a niece, I think, of André Levinson [1887–1933], one of the editors of *Les Nouvelles Littéraires.* Jászi had been a visitor there before going to America, Pál Szende went there very often, Károlyi and Nitti were fairly regular visitors at her Sunday afternoon parties and I myself went there seven or eight times. The Ligue des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen was founded during the Dreyfus Affair, and it was in her house that the Central Committee sat for some time. Her father [Pierre Frédérick] Dorian [1814–1873] was a cabinet minister [for Public Work] in 1870 after the fall of the Second Empire and I think her husband was a Republican senator. Léon Blum and Édouard Herriot [1872–1957] came to her salon sometimes, the French guests being mostly parliamentarians of the Radical and Socialist parties. The villa was near the Bois de Boulogne, rue de la Faisanderie, very comfortable and beautiful. One of her special treasures was a set of drawings by Victor Hugo displayed on the walls of the salon. He had been a frequent guest after his return from exile in 1870 and Madame Ménard-Dorian, then a young married woman of twenty-one or twenty-two, had been on the station platform to welcome him back with flowers, as she told me herself. Her daughter [Pauline, 1870–1941] had married Georges Hugo, the poet's grandson, of *L'Art d'être Grand-Père.*

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[166] Wikipedia still records his death having occurred on the battlefield.

Books and reviews covered a big table in the drawing room. Refreshments were served in an anteroom, but there were cigars and cigarettes in the drawing room. On the first floor there was a room for the children of the ladies who came to the house, including the Károlyi children. In 1926 when I was first invited to the salon, Madame Ménard-Dorian was in her late seventies, although still lively and active. On the occasion of my last visit in 1929 she could only give her left hand to visitors, supported by another lady, her right arm being paralysed, and she could no longer stand when welcoming ladies, as had always been her habit.

New publications were always exhibited on the drawing room table and on the occasion of one of my earliest visits to the house in 1926 I was looking at the books and fell into conversation with an elderly French gentleman. He asked me which country I had come from and what was my connection with the house. Eventually he said to me: “Savez-vous, jeune homme que vous êtes ici chez Swann? [Do you know, young man, that you are at Swann's right now?]” I did not understand the allusion at the time, not yet having read Proust, although I knew his name. The modern French authors whose books I knew when I arrived in Paris were Anatole France, Romain Rolland; Gide and Proust I only read later.

Chapter 12

Collaboration with the Italian Exiles

In my youth in Paris, I was almost a *vieux* [old] Communard in my sympathies, a revolutionary in the Latin tradition. If there had never been a Hitler, I might have continued along those lines for several more years, although I failed to arrive at any clear and consistent theory on those sympathies, on my libertaire inclination, which made me extremely isolated amongst my fellow Socialists of those days. I failed to make myself understood by them and I accepted the fact that my time had not yet come. It was Mussolini and Hitler (the latter especially) who made me detest the whole Revolutionary Mythos, as Georges Sorel called it. I began to appreciate traditional and conservative values.

Anti-fascists and anti-Nazis of those days in Paris were not true revolutionaries. They were often men without any substantial thought, particularly the Italians, whose horizons went no further than the liberal parliamentary era before 1914–1918 and who had none of our Hungarian experience of international affairs. Carlo Rosselli tried to see further and lay deeper foundations for a European intellectual revolutionary revival. He did not succeed. Even if he had not been murdered in 1937, the few contemporaries who followed him (Carlo Levi [1902–1975], Aldo Garòsci [1907–2000], the Frenchman Henri Pollès [1909–1994], a refined and sensitive French intellectual, who was an opposition communist, in reality a Marxist) would soon have realised that the only connecting link between them was a very ephemeral aversion to fascism. Prince Hubert Loewenstein [1906–1984], who on account of his personal Italian associations was for a short while one of our group, was not taken seriously and developed in a direction which none of us liked or approved. A more consistent and a more serious anti-Nazism appeared later in the person of [Hermann A. N.] Rauschning [1887–1982], on the eve of the war. We were also divided in our attitudes towards the Spanish Civil War, as well as to Hitler. Aldo Garòsci was a disciple of the Renaissance, a humanist with an anti-medieval Risorgimento ideology, a believer in Greek philosophy and in political forms copied from ancient Greece, although he called them Progressive. I was on the road to becoming a Christian Liberal, almost a Christian Conservative, enemy of the Anschluss and the whole modern German nationalism, not only of the Anschluss, but its Hitlerite form. Carlo Levi went back to Italy, was arrested by Mussolini and spent some years interned in the South where he discovered the semi-African corner of the old Kingdom of Naples, which subsequently absorbed him completely, as the worldwide success of his post-war novel *Christ Stopped on the Road to Eboli* showed.

To return to the story of our collaboration with the exile group in Paris, by 1926 the Nitti family was installed in Paris, first at the rue Duguay-Trouin, then at 26 rue Vavin. As I remember, my first conversation with the former Italian Prime Minister, upon being introduced to him by his son Frederigo and his daughter Luigia, whom I had met at the house of mutual friends, was on the subject of the Windischgraetz forgery.

Nitti was a friend of Hungary, whose cause he was still defending enthusiastically against the Trianon settlement, and he was a personal friend of Count Albert Apponyi, the elder statesman who represented Hungary at the League of Nations in Geneva. In his reply to my exposé of this queer but very sad scandal, Nitti blamed the Peace Treaties for everything. I could not disagree with that, nor with his remark that the victors had delivered Europe to a sort of international banditism, the centre of which had now been transferred to Rome, where Mussolini was in power. From the perspective of today, we know that this phenomenon with all its ramifications did not come to an end with the fall of Mussolini, or indeed of Hitler, as even Nitti in his farsightedness could not guess. His two books *Europa senza Pace* and *La Tragedia dell'Europa* were translated into every European language.[167]

Closer relations between the Hungarians and the Italian exile groups began in 1926, the latter grouped in an informal way around Nitti, Modigliani, and Salvemini [1873–1957], soon to be joined by Pietro Nenni, Arturo Labriola, Francesco Buffoni, and others. The most usual meeting place was the Café de la Rotonde at Montparnasse, where more Italian than French was spoken and where I often joined them, besides visiting the Nitti brothers and sisters fairly often in their home in the neighbourhood. Nitti himself, who appeared seldom in La Rotonde, not wanting to be seen too often in public, entertained from time to time a numerous company of Italian and other exiles in his study. Donna Antonia Nitti was an exquisite hostess, who could provide refreshments at any time for any number of visitors, some of them invited, others considering that they had a standing invitation to drop in on certain evenings. I, like all the other young men who were happy to come to the welcoming appartement, was the object of Donna Antonia's very endearing Italian talent for matchmaking, in my case without success. The former Prime Minister sometimes asked me to translate orally for him into French some difficult passages from German books which interested him particularly, his German being much less good than his excellent French, spoken with an Italian accent and intonation which he never lost.

His devastating criticism of the Peace Conference was familiar to me from many conversations, as well as his criticism of French policy (which did not prevent him from wearing the insignia of a Commandeur of the Légion d'Honneur in his lapel). So was his frequent criticism of German pedantry, which as a former professor at Naples University he tried to reduce to more modest proportions. This did not prevent him, however, from siding with the Germans in their grievances against Versailles, and from accusing the French experts on European matters of being worse than any madman of German science had ever been. He was somewhat irascible and was not universally popular amongst the Italians who found him somewhat overbearing, but we could not resist the attraction of his always lively arguments, and we appreciated also his courtesy in listening to people who disagreed with his views; despite my youth and my limited knowledge, I was one of those who sometimes disagreed with his prejudices. For example, some of us were convinced that in the last resort, and even at their worst, the French politicians were inspired by an idea of freedom and justice, whereas the German mind was poisoned by a curious mixture of Darwinism and Hegelian philosophy, claiming that might is right and strength must prevail, because this is “the logic of the World Spirit” which moves History. Nitti was not entirely familiar with this basic difference between the belligerents of the First World War. Hence our lively discussions, which were, however, fruitful for my own evolution.

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[167] *Peaceless Europe* (1922), *The Wreck of Europe* (1923).

I saw Nitti for the last time in this life in Rome, in the spring of 1949, when he was over eighty, broken by family sorrows (surviving Donna Antonia and three of his five children) and still reluctant to say farewell to his rich political past, having held eight ministerial offices besides presiding over two governments.[168] The old gentleman was at his best when speaking of the period of the First World War – and of his jealousy of Count Carlo Sforza, then once more Minister of Foreign Affairs and not considered too old to play a part in events in his late seventies, when he, Nitti at eighty-two was: “Et dire que c’est moi qui ai inventé cet homme! Sforza, c’est moi qui l’ai fait! [It was me who invented that man! Sforza owes to me what he became!]” Again, he was in his element when he was talking to my wife: “Vous savez, Madame, je n’ai jamais serré la main à Mussolini …. Je le croyais fou et les événements ont prouvé qu’il l’était [You know, Madame, I never shook hands with Mussolini … I thought him a fool and I was proven right].” As well as his son Giuseppe Nitti, a liberal Member of Parliament, there was a senator present, who asked me about the communist land reform in Hungary and I had to explain that I no longer had any connection with Károlyi, with whose name the Nittis still associated me.

Our émigré action which was at its height in the course of 1926 did not unhappily give the result we hoped for. Bethlen was a subtle and clever politician, who survived even the Beniczky and the Windischgraetz scandals, although a letter in his own handwriting proved that he had known all about the now notorious forgery. On one occasion a Hungarian not connected with our group made a noisy demonstration against him at Geneva, but the general view there was that Bethlen was no doubt better than anybody else who would have replaced him. Following his visit to Rome in 1927 he achieved a first success in securing access for Hungarian ships to the port of Fiume [now Rijeka]. The Hungarian press was full of praise for the “new Italy”.

The first symptom of the new situation created by the Bethlen–Mussolini friendship appeared in Vienna in July 1927, when a manifestation by the Social Democrats against the Heimwehr ended in violence, with police fire accounting for about a hundred casualties. Shots were also exchanged in several provinces between Heimwehr troops and socialists at various meetings and we received reliable information in Paris to the effect that veterans of the Hungarian detachments were preparing for a march on Red Vienna, supported from the south by the Italian fascists. We also received information that Italian weapons were being used by Hungarian army units and further that an anonymous brochure published in Switzerland gave detailed information that rearmament was in full swing in Hungary. A few copies of this brochure were in circulation, the author being the Austrian Ludwig Bauer [1876–1935], at that time diplomatic correspondent of the *Basler Nationalzeitung* whom we met in Paris and who wrote several books warning Europe about the possibility of rearmament in the defeated countries, of which Germany would one day be the leader.

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[168] In fact, only one.

Nevertheless, if all of us – exiles of different nationalities in Paris – were anti-fascist, we did not see fascism in the same light. Some people saw in fascism mainly a new phase in what Marx called the class struggle, capitalism versus the workers. Others concentrated on the prospects of European rearmament and the danger of war, in the event of Germany and Italy coming closer together, as Germany could not risk a war without having at least one of the European great powers as an ally, while Italy would not be able to risk a war alone. Mussolini's withdrawal of the Italian Navy at the time of the Corfu incident in 1923 was a proof of this.[169] Among those who concentrated on this aspect of fascism, I should pay a tribute to the clear-sightedness of two old friends, men of great experience in German affairs, Pál Szende and József Diener-Dénes, whom I characterised earlier. The latter's book, already mentioned, *La Hongrie, son oligarchie et son peuple* published in Paris in 1927 with a Preface by Léon Blum, was the best exposition of our fears, which were shared by some equally far-sighted Italians, among them Modigliani and especially Dino Rondani [1868–1951], the socialist Member of Parliament who reproached his party for not having a really international outlook and leaving foreign affairs to 'gentlemen'. As Nitti said at one of our meetings organised by the Bulgarian Peasant Party men, of diplomats: "Ces beaux messieurs avec un monocle qui ne savent pas grand Chose [Those gentlemen with monocle do not know much (about the world)]."

A little story here illustrates the outlook of those Italians who were less far-sighted. On the Rome–Paris express one day in 1949, I passed a first-class compartment on my way to the dining car when somebody knocked at the glass door to stop me. It was my old friend Francesco Buffoni, Senator of Milan, whom I had last seen in Paris in 1934. He returned to Italy after the fall of fascism and practised as a barrister as well as becoming a senator once more, a member of the Nenni socialist group. He explained to me that he believed in working class unity, and thought that no revolution would come while old, experienced men like him were at the head of the left-wing movement. In practice, from the old Paris days onwards he was always an old-school liberal with an almost fanatical attachment to liberties, including excesses. He was a typical barrister-politician, competent in a limited sense, but unable to reach higher perspectives. Vanity and success are great seductions for such men. I often said and at that moment in the train thought again, that Fascism, Nazism and Bolshevism all put me into the queerest companies; this is the worst they have done to me. Without the fascists I would never have had anything to do with the average left-wing politician, without the Nazis certainly nothing to do with the German radical intelligentsia, and without the Bolsheviks nothing to do with the democratic nationalism of the average East European refugee of today. Their spiritual homes were never mine. But enough of commenting on my old friend Buffoni, who at least to me was always kindness itself and was genuinely happy about this accidental meeting.

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[169] Mussolini's troops occupied Corfu over a pretext, giving Greece a humiliating ultimatum beforehand. However, the crisis ended with Italy withdrawing, but the Greeks fulfilling practically every Italian demand, under the pressure of the League of Nations, which suffered, accordingly, a serious loss of reputation.

Meanwhile, the German situation became increasingly disquieting. Carl von Ossietzky in the Berlin weekly *Die Weltbühne* and Helmut von Gerlach in the Monday paper *Die Welt am Montag* were giving alarming information on the increased activity of various German semi-military organisations. By 1928 Kurt Rosenfeld, a well-known Berlin barrister and socialist Member of the Reichstag[170] visited Paris and gave some lectures under the chairmanship of Jean Longuet (Marx's grandson, whom I knew well for several years) in which we heard with surprise that Adolf Hitler, whom we thought a ridiculous failure who had disappeared with the Bierkeller [Beerhall] Putsch in Munich in 1923, had turned up again and his party was going to put up candidates at the next elections to the Reichstag. The Russian émigré groups in Paris, especially Milyukov, whom we met at International Conferences of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, knew that German pilots were being trained in Russia, and that new machines and weapons were being tried out.

When Carlo Rosselli and his companions arrived in Paris in 1930, I was in Berlin. When I came back to Paris in 1933 after Hitler came to power, I joined their Giustizia e Libertà group, whose prominent members were Carlo Rosselli and Aldo Garòsci. My publishing facilities were, however, limited to some articles in the weekly *Giustizia e Libertà* and the quarterly review *Quaderno,* financed by Rosselli from his private means and by other well-to-do Italian sympathisers. I met Rosselli fairly regularly at lunches and dinners in his flat at the Place du Panthéon, and sometimes our discussions, at which Aldo Garòsci, Carlo Levi, Gino Cazorzi and other Italians were present, went on far into the night, without any objections from Marion Rosselli, the kind-hearted and hospitable lady of the house, who had small children to look after. As I exposed in a sort of memorandum to Rosselli, which was possibly kept in his archives, my aim was a new International, grouped around *Giustizia e Libertà* which was the only really active anti-Fascist organisation of those days, and I tried to win some Germans and Austrians living in Paris over to that new group, which was not hostile to the Socialist International, but was seeking new lines of action. Rosselli, although a Professor of Economics and a post-graduate student at Cambridge University where he met his future wife, Marion Cave, had a very broad-minded outlook and welcomed every new idea; perhaps because he was a trained economist, he did not see the fascist phenomenon in purely economic terms as an attempt to save the capitalist system.

In April 1949 I saw in Florence a school named Fratelli Rosselli and when I read in the *Manchester Guardian* two years later that the coffins of Carlo and Nello had been transferred from Paris and re-interred at a ceremony presided over by Gaetano Salvemini, many memories came back to my mind. I remembered my distichon of 1937, which was first published in Sylvia Pankhurst's *New Times and Ethiopia News* in that same year [see later], and then again in *Free Europe,* one of the leading London weeklies edited by Kasimirz Smogorzevski, on 10th June 1940, when Italy declared war on France: Pugione viros defecit dignos ignavus / Trucidans fortes, virus pugna jecit. / Vigilate Italici, decima Junii nocte / Vae genti optimos quae non vindicare valet. [With the dagger were these worthy men defeated, / Poison was thrown in the battle and killed the brave ones. / Awaken Italians, on the 10th night of June / Woe to the people who do not revenge such worthy sons.][171] Salvemini and some other people present knew these lines in 1937 and I wondered if they remembered them.

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[170] Kurt Rosenfeld (1877–1943) defended, among others, Rosa Luxemburg and also von Ossietzky. He was one of the few radical leftist (social democrat, later communist) politicians who escaped and went into emigration, first to Paris, then to New York where he died.

The 10th June 1937 saw the murders of Carlo and Nello Rosselli in the forest of Bagnolles de l'Orme. That 10th June was the thirteenth anniversary of the murder of Matteotti. On the third anniversary of the murders at Bagnolles de l'Orme, Mussolini tried to stab France and Britain in the back, but this time he did not succeed on his lucky day. The words he used on June 10th 1940 in his last attempt to use his dagger were more imbecile than diabolical. History had greater monsters than the late Benito, but no historical monster was ever more grotesque. I give here my own verses on his fall in 1943: "Sic finit infamia / Sicilia tradit tradentem / Ventis iit sceptrum / Afflante Jove ridente." [This was infamy's end / Sicily betrayed the traitor / The sceptre was blown away by the wind / Caught in the gust of Jupiter's laughter.][172]

Sometimes I still regret my old powers of indignation and fulmination. There was a time when I could write a style proscrit, full of bitter satire and indignation. Would it be better if I forgot how, and with what feelings, emotions and passions, I navigated over the stormy waters of the European flood when the tides were rising, and if I only care now for the hill or the heath which I reached eventually, and from which I do not intend to jump back into the remaining waters? For the waters are still there on the ground, and in my remaining lifetime, the remnants of the flood will hardly dry up.

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[171] Menczer's own translation.

[172] Menczer's own translation.

Chapter 13

Berlin Interlude

We did not get very far with our idea of a new International of Liberal Socialism, as I have just indicated. By the 1930s the Hungarian exiles no longer had a corporate existence. The Bulgarian Peasant Party centre in Paris dispersed slowly but surely, as a liberalisation of the Tzankov regime allowed most of the exiles to return. In Hungary a similar tendency kept the Horthy regime in power, although General Gömbös became Prime Minister in 1932 and remained enthusiastic towards Mussolini and friendly towards Hitler.

I was able to expose many of my views in Hungarian reviews published in Budapest, written from Paris and Berlin and later from London, even my views on Mussolini and fascism. The main review in Hungary in which I and more notable émigrés like Jászi could publish essays and articles was *Századunk,* edited by Rusztem Vámbéry, my old friend and defence counsel at my first trial. As a clever lawyer, Vámbéry found the secret of how not to get confiscated. The Minister of the Interior had the right to confiscate any periodical and forbid any publication, but the law defined 'periodical' as a publication which appeared more than ten times a year. So Vámbéry's review did not appear during the holiday months of July and August, which protected it against sequestration.

At any rate, I could have returned to Hungary in the 1930s. My articles in the Paris *Le Soir,* edited by Ludovic-Oscar Frossard, and in the Berlin *Weltbühne* excited, however, the further interest of the Attorney General in my person. My return to Hungary would have caused new trials when the trials of my companions of the 1920s were all over and I would certainly not have acted as Lajos Hatvany did when he returned to Hungary and offered the Court and Horthy his apologies. In fact, I did have two more trials in contumacy, for articles published in the Berlin *Weltbühne,* in one of which I commented on the meeting of 'Gyula' [Hungarian for Julius] and 'Caesar', i.e. Gömbös and Mussolini, in Rome. It is beyond my powers of recollection now to say what my third trial was all about. In a similar contumacy trial, Vámbéry argued that any trial in the absence of the accused is impossible under Hungarian law, as the Penal Code of 1878 expressly stated that the accused must be alive, which the Court has not the possibility of ascertaining if the accused lived outside Hungary. Vámbéry was a past master in the art of making the law look an ass – as big an ass as it is possible to be.

In 1938, after the Hitler march on Vienna – Anschluss suggests the union was voluntary, thus I never use the term in this context – one of Károlyi's former ministers, Sándor Juhász-Nagy [1883–1946], Secretary-General of the Calvinist Evangelical Reformed Church Synod and living in Debrecen, made an appeal for a united national front to resist the Nazi penetration into Hungary. General Gömbös, my particular enemy and target after Horthy, had died in 1936. Horthy himself no longer counted for much in the new conditions. Tibor Eckhardt, once a friend of Gömbös, turned sharply against him during the latter's premiership and I thought that with my international experience, I could be used in a united National Front against Nazism. Vámbéry replied, however, that after the fall of Austria, he was absolutely sure that the new war would break out within a year, or at the most within two years, so that all of us who had belonged to the old Hungarian opposition would be more useful on the Allied side. I was informed that this was also the view taken by Tibor Eckhardt, whose firm anti-Nazi stand in the Hungarian Parliament ever since Hitler's advent to power, was something of a welcome surprise to us, who remembered his past in the early 1920s.

So once more I decided to remain abroad and prolong my émigré existence, though as an émigré case, it bored me more and more. Our case against Horthy was already exhausted – by 1933 in fact – whereas in the 1920s it had been a European issue. Károlyi had ceased to be our leader, almost all of us disapproved his leaning towards Moscow, though we kept our personal relations with him. Jászi had become an American citizen in 1928 and announced publicly that his loyalty to America was final and even in the event of a complete reversal of the situation, he would not re-settle in his old country. Pál Szende died in 1934. József Diener-Dénes was seventy by 1927, and he did not intend to take up any further Hungarian activities. In fact, he died ten years later. Others were old, exhausted and with very few exceptions, the Hungarian exile group had lost contact with the home country and had no means of influencing events at home. The great test was yet to come, the Second World War foreshadowed by Mussolini's antics and to my mind made certain by Hitler's coming to power in 1933. The nerve centre of Europe was now Germany. The Weimar Republic might have succeeded but by 1930 it had failed. I should have felt like a deserter if I had left the scene before the great test had come and I wanted to be on the French and British Western side, not on the German one.

With the French police under Jean Chiappe becoming hostile to émigré activities, in which they suspected communist influence, I had moved on from Paris to Berlin in the summer of 1929, which was becoming increasingly important and about which I wanted to have some experience. I lived there from 1929 to 1933, when my main job was to be Berlin correspondent of a Vienna Agency of the German language press of the successor states. I wrote also as a specialist on Central and East European affairs in *Die Weltbühne,* edited by Carl von Ossietsky, and later by Helmut von Gerlach, and *Die Welt am Montag,* edited also by von Gerlach.

Reading in 1958 Hedda Adlon's amusing book *Hotel Adlon,*[173] the history of the famous establishment from 1907 to April 1945, when the hotel was burnt down by one of the last bombs before the arrival of the Russian troops, I recalled my own visits to the Adlon Bar. Once I had a meeting with Mihály Károlyi there, when we discussed a provisional job for which he had recommended me: to act as guide and interpreter to a party of French journalists in 1931 or 32, who were composing a special number on Germany for the illustrated weekly *Vu,* as popular in those days as *Paris Match* is today. I cannot resist telling the story of a ferocious joke I played on the notorious 'Putzi' Hanfstaengel, in the course of that job. I remember that I flatly refused to accompany one of these French journalists to an interview with Hitler and as a result had my honorary curtailed (which was nonetheless satisfactory for a fortnight's work). So, I had my private joke as a revenge.

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[173] *Hotel Adlon. The Life and Death of a Great Hotel.* Horizon Press, 1960.

Pretending to be a French journalist working for a paper which I knew was then defunct, and speaking in French, I rang up Putzi Hanfstaengel from the Adlon Bar and asked him questions to give the impression that nobody outside Germany knew about Hitler. Was the name spelt with one 't' or two? Was his Christian name Alfred or Adolf? I understood his original name was Schücklgruber [*sic!*] – was this not a much more German name for the Führer than Hitler? I deliberately put ridiculous questions, weighing every word to make it insulting. I knew that nobody was more servile than these brutes before they got the power to be otherwise. Finally, I even risked the remark that the appearance of Hitler was said to contradict the theory of Gobineau, who said that the Nordic men were all tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed, while dark hair and especially a moustache were considered Mediterranean, perhaps even Oriental. Still the fellow did not realise that I was testing his imbecility and continued to answer my questions in all seriousness. As soon as I had finished, I gave out the joke to the French journalists that the German salute was obviously calculated to show that Hitler was fair-haired under the armpits and this joke went round the press in Berlin in no time. One of these journalists, the former surrealist poet Philippe Soupault,[174] persisted in his attempt to make me go all the same to the Braunhaus [the Nazi headquarters in Berlin]. In the end I told him that if Hitler came to power, then I predicted one thing: that the Hotel Adlon would sooner or later become the GHQ of Allied Armies occupying Berlin. It was smashed by Ally bombs, but I was not far wrong after all.

I saw György Markos fairly often in Berlin where he spent two years (1931–1933), meeting mostly at the Romanisches Café, the equivalent of Montparnasse in Berlin. As soon as he arrived in Berlin, his first call was on me. He worked for some time for the Münzenberg group of newspapers. Willy Münzenberg, later a dissident, was in those days a leading fellow traveller.[175] We were not as close friends in those days as we had been in Budapest ten years before, or in Vienna in 1923–1924. I might have seen him more often if he had not so frequently been in the company of Arthur Koestler, still in those days an ardent communist, and whom I found to be the least attractive personality of the Romanisches Café world of Berlin and whom my closest Berlin friends, Róbert 'Loló' Vámbéry[176] and Pál Kecskeméti,[177] liked even less than I did. Waiting at the entrance to Gerbeaud in Budapest in 1972, almost forty years later, I had no difficulty in recognising György Markos. His fair hair was completely white, but his features were the same and so were his manners. His pose then, as in his youth, was to be what the Germans call a 'Naturbursch' ['child of nature'], his mannerism consisting in having bad manners, but not without a good sense of humour, much wit and a certain charm resulting from his absurd exaggerations.

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[174] Philippe Soupault (1897–1990), Dadaist, later surrealist writer, poet, librettist.

[175] Wilhelm Münzenberg (1889–1940), German communist politician, editor, propagandist; from 1936 a critic of Stalin, wherefore he was haunted by the NKVD. He escaped to Paris, was arrested by the French authorities, but during the turbulent weeks of the German invasion he again escaped and was found dead later in a forest. Probably he was murdered.

[176] Róbert (Loló) Vámbéry (1907–1999) was the son of Rusztem Vámbéry.

[177] Pál Kecskeméti (1901–1980), historian, political scientist, later professor of sociology at Stanford University.

Róbert (Loló) Vámbéry was still a child at the time of the Galilei Club. I first met him in the late 1920s in Paris, then again in Berlin and finally in London. There was nobody in those Berlin days with whom I had more frequent conversations on certain subjects of our youth than with Loló Vámbéry, except for Aurel Kolnai (two years my senior as a schoolboy and destined to become a noted philosopher) and Pál Kecskeméti, correspondent in Berlin of the United Press of America Agency. Yet after the war, I only saw him once more in 1967 when he came to London from America where he had settled, at a dinner party given by the Kolnais, despite our hundred common interests, sympathies and aversions which we discussed sometimes daily in Berlin. In his Berlin period, he was an assistant director to the famous [actor and director] Ernst Joseph Aufricht [1898–1971] and was himself a successful dramatist.

Róbert Vámbéry knew Aurel Kolnai well, but philosophy and politics were remote territories for him. In Berlin in 1930 he told me a lot of stories about Aurel, one of which I remember in particular. Aurel had just published his *Sex and Morals* with a German Catholic firm; the critics considered it a Catholic reply to Otto Weininger's famous *Sex and Character.*[178] Loló was not in the habit of reading heavy books (at that time he read manuscripts for the theatre company of Aufricht, which produced Bert Brecht's plays, so that he was kept sufficiently busy). One day he picked up Aurel's new book and opened it just at the page where St Alphonsus Liguori is quoted as saying that "Nature requires woman to be below the man" in the physical act. Loló said: "Tell me, Aurel, when copying such passages from a saint and great theologian in the library, I suppose your mouth was holywatering a lot, wasn't it?" This story became famous in our circle and the holywatering mouth proverbial.

Kolnai I saw again in London in August 1952 for the first time since 1939, when he was making a brief stay before returning to Laval University in Quebec, following upon a lecture tour in Spain. He looked more or less the same, but said I still looked twenty years younger than he did. To describe Aurel's conversation, the pen of a Boswell would be needed, and I do not possess the gifts of this eighteenth century writer to make eccentric characters live or describe the gestures and mimicry he added to his stories. He had a Rabelaisian humour and a lot of comic idiosyncrasies both motivated and unmotivated. His conversation would begin almost normally in its initial stages, then would come the local jokes in Hungarian of olden days, which apart from Loló Vámbéry, Pál Kecskeméti, György Kovács and myself, few people, if any, would understand and which would be lost in translation anyhow. Then he would begin to elaborate his argument concerning the subject under discussion in a highly baroque style full of allusions yet retaining complete control of his complex argument until he reached his triumphant conclusion. His eccentricity of that August

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[178] *Sexualethik. Sinn und Grundlagen der Geschlechtsmoral.* Paderborn: Schöningh, 1930. English edition: *Sexual Ethics. The Meaning and Foundations of Sexual Morality.* London: Routledge, 2005.

1952 was to buy second-hand medical books and make rhymed comments on them in the margins in Hungarian, German, French, English and Spanish.[179]

I have kept some of Aurel Kolnai's letters which he wrote to me from Canada as well as those he wrote to me when he resettled in England in 1955 and they could well form an Appendix to my Journals, if I could ever reconstruct our local jokes, so to say our 'secrets'. I cannot and nobody else can.[180]

As to Pál Kecskeméti, whose twin brother György was murdered by the Nazis, he left Germany shortly before the war of 1939 and settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His wife, Elisabeth Lang [1889–1959], was a pianist and pupil of Bartók and they both edited Bartók's correspondence after his death. I was suddenly to meet him again for the first and last time in London shortly after the war, in 1947 on the top of a bus, when he was on a mission to London for the American Department of Information. I remember that when we met for dinner a few days later in a Soho restaurant, we had a long discussion on *l'esprit fin* and *l'esprit de géometrie* of Pascal in their relation to the contemporary world.

It was in Berlin that I first made the acquaintance of Frederick A. Voigt, then correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* and one of the finest political commentators of his generation. After the war we became great friends in London, and I met him frequently at his Club, the Reform, when he was editor of the review *The Nineteenth Century and After.* Our friendship only ceased with his death in 1956. Sinclair Lewis of the ea[…][181]

I was by now a very unorthodox socialist. I did not believe in 1932 that Hitler would come to power, for that would mean almost immediate war with France and Poland. Thus, I anticipated in November 1932 a mild form of military dictatorship under General von Schleicher,[182] but even under him I was sure that the great European crisis was at hand. What I hoped for was a new German socialism which could still perhaps prevent a new war. This particular crisis which preceded Hitler's coming to power, could, in my opinion, have been the real opportunity for the working class parties to emancipate themselves from Marxism. When I recall those far-off days when I was on Gerlach's and Ossietzky's staff, it seems to me that I saw some trends of the world evolution clearly enough. I still think that I was right in those days to argue that the principal question was not Hitler's threat to abolish the social legislation of the Marxists (Germany had had socialist governments since the defeat and revolution of 1918), nor Schleicher's promise to preserve it, but that this was the moment to show 'another Germany'. As the 'other Germany' failed to give any sign of life, Europe concluded that there was no such thing. It was only to emerge for one tragic moment in the plot to assassinate Hitler in 1944 and then it was too late. For some problems I had a good eye, although I was still very naive in other things, and I did not possess one quarter of my present knowledge on problems which have never left me since.

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[179] In his last years, Kolnai had a very diligent and faithful English disciple, the late Francis Dunlop, whose biography on Kolnai is highly useful not only for the (often exciting) biographical details but for the introduction into Kolnai's intellectual path and philosophical achievements: *The Life and Thought of Aurel Kolnai.* Burlington: Ashgate, 2002.

[180] Béla Menczer's and Aurél Kolnai's correspondence soon to be published in Hungarian by the Ludovika University Press.

[181] A page is missing here from the manuscript held by the Petőfi Literary Museum. The Manuscript Archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where most of Menczer's legacy is stored, officially confirmed that they hold no copy of this biography.

[182] Kurt von Schleicher (1882–1934) was Chancellor of Germany before Hitler, who had him murdered on the Night of the Long Knives, together with his wife.

The visit to London in 1953 of an old German friend Martha Klages, revived painful memories of the early Hitler days. Martha was the wife of Karl Klages [1904–1967], who was in pre-Hitler days a promising young socialist politician and Inspector of Schools for the Berlin Town Council. I was often at their flat in the Tiergarten when we discussed the exciting events of 1932–1933. I saw her for the last time in March 1933 when I left Berlin to go back to Paris; she came to the Friedrichstrasse Station to say goodbye, but mainly to be sure that I got off safely, for in those days a lot of queer things could happen to somebody suspect like myself. The Nazis discovered my existence a little later, perhaps when going through the files at the offices of *Welt Am Montag* and *Die Weltbühne* when the editor Carl von Ossietzky was arrested on February 28th, the day after the Reichstag fire, while Helmuth von Gerlach had already received a police visit (still correct and legal, the Berlin police were not yet Nazified) requesting him to surrender his passport. Insofar as I was known in Berlin, I was known as a member of Ossietzky's and Gerlach's circle, and a journalist colleague who lectured to such audiences as the Liga für Menschenrechte, of which Gerlach was the chairman. The Berlin police also knew that I was not on good terms with Horthy's official representatives, as I was naturally interrogated as an alien and a political case, before I was given the first permit to stay in Prussia in 1929 which was subsequently renewed. Karl Klages told me that a high official of the Police Department who was anti-Nazi had safely destroyed several hundreds of files before the Reichstag fire of 27th February, which was the signal for the transition from the legal phase of Hitler's rule to open terror; my file was probably amongst them.

Karl Klages was suspended from his job in 1933 and in the war years, being unable to produce a 'party record', he and his whole family were put into a war labour camp in Poland, i.e. in semi-internment, a degree higher – or lower – than a concentration camp.[183] Higher, because they were not ill-treated by the rowdies and could move freely in the little district where they worked, although they were several times reprimanded for talking to Polish children. (What meticulous organisation in that madness, that mental plague which befell Germany in 1933!) Lower, because a decent German could only feel that a man of honour belongs to a prison or concentration camp in a country ruled by such canaille. Martha gave me a vivid account of the cowardly flight of the Nazi hordes from Poland, when finally that eternal shame on Germany and mankind came to an end and that 'swine' – as the Catholic philosopher Theodor Haecker [1879–1945], himself a master of language, who could find no other name than 'swine' – killed himself. Even physically the Nazis were utterly repulsive types; I would have preferred to stroke a rat rather than touch one of them – as indeed I did once, and with my fist. I have only to meet a friend I know when I was young, for all these meditations on problems which were on my mind for decades to come back.

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[183] Klages was in the *Reicharbeitsdienst,* the compulsory working organisation, that was, the war closing to the end, partly militarised.

Chapter 14

Life in Bloomsbury

30th June is always a strange date in my life. When I first came to London from Paris in 1934, in order to refresh and brush up my then very defective English, I went almost every night of the early summer in the first few weeks of my stay (which I thought would just be a provisional one) to the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park to see a Shakespeare play. On 29th June, a Friday, I saw *Richard III.* On 30th June Hitler flew to Munich to have Röhm and his followers shot, out of righteous indignation over their well-known homosexuality. On the same day, Hitler's men murdered General von Schleicher and his wife, the Ministerialdirektor Klausener, Captain Litzmann, son of General Litzmann, and some two hundred other people. (I do not know whether historians of the Nazi Reich were ever able to ascertain the exact number.)

That same day, I made either my first or my second visit to Wickham Steed's salon at Lansdowne House, Holland Park. (I shall speak at length of Wickham Steed later.) I had been given a permanent invitation to his Saturday parties, Károlyi having introduced me, and also Prince Hubert Loewenstein had spoken to Steed about me. On this occasion, the conversation concerned the murders of the day (in French, the *langue officielle* for the elderly diplomats who were Steed's oldest friends and regular visitors). As Steed had invited me on purpose as someone knowledgeable on German affairs, I was asked many questions. I said that I believed the revelations about Röhm and his Stormtroopers to be based on fact and I mentioned the strange coincidence of seeing *Richard III* on one day and hearing of the Berlin–Munich murders the next day. "So, you see Hitler as Richard III?" someone asked me. "Not quite" I replied, "Richard murdered his potential heirs and successors, but not their wives. Hitler's future fame will be that he murdered Madame von Schleicher, though this will not prevent distinguished British people from going to Berchtesgarten to visit him."

There is a postscript to this story. At the beginning of the war of 1939–1945, Hitler gave the name Litzmannstadt to the conquered Polish town of Lodz, in memory of General [Karl] Litzmann [1850–1936], who in December 1914 had fought a victorious battle there against the Tsar's army. I wrote a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* which was published and in which I told the story of Captain Litzmann on 30th June 1934.[184] The *Daily Telegraph* referred to this letter in its editorial and the BBC also referred to it in its English News commentary and in its German language service. I had finished my letter with a paraphrase from *Richard III:* at the hour of reckoning, which cannot be far now, German voices with a harsh Prussian accent will join with Polish ones to shout: "Bloody and guilty awake, despair and die!"[185]

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[184] Karl-Siegmund Litzmann (1893–1945) was son of General Litzmann and he was indeed in the SA but was not murdered (he did not show up in the SA gathering on 30th of June). Since his father was a strong supporter of Hitler, he was perhaps spared for this reason. He later joined the SS and was also General Commissioner of Estonia. Menczer's information are therefore false.

[185] The literal quotation is "Bloody and guilty, guiltily awake, / And in a bloody battle end thy days! / Think on Lord Hastings: despair and die!" (Act 4, Scene 5).

Rudolf Olden read my letter in the *Daily Telegraph* and wrote to me from Oxford to express his appreciation. Rudolf Olden [1885–1940] was originally a barrister at the German Bar, then political and parliamentary editor of the *Berliner Tagblatt,* a foremost liberal daily in those days, and later as a refugee from Hitler he became a lecturer on Political Science at Oxford. He perished with his charming wife in 1940 in the confusion following the French collapse, when prominent German exiles were sent to Canada, and his ship was torpedoed by his compatriots. He would have been most useful for the British cause, and it was a tragic case of bureaucratic muddle.

Following this letter, I also had a telephone call from a gentleman I did not know and whose name I have forgotten, but who asked me to meet him. He introduced himself, when I did so, as a *Justizrat* [councillor of court] and a representative of the German Freedom Party. He told me that there was a conservative and Christian resistance in Germany and indeed they would bring the Nazi era to an end quoting my words "with a harsh Prussian accent".

Until I came to England in 1934, I had only had casual contacts with English people in Paris and Berlin, and even then, it was with people who were semi-continental like Freddy Voigt of the *Manchester Guardian* or Robert Dell [1865–1940] (Paris correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*) who deliberately posed as irremediably English and who exaggerated the English accent of his otherwise perfect French, to underline his pose. My two guides in England were Mihály Károlyi and Rusztem Vámbéry. Both had had a great number of English contacts since their childhood, both spoke English, not only fluently, but as well as any non-native could hope to do. Both made practically yearly trips to England ever since their youth (except in the war years of 1914–1918) and both were convinced that England was a very curious place, something unique in the world, almost impossible to compare with any other country in Europe – a curious anachronism, for better or for worse.

That England of 1934 was still dominated by the Eton, Harrow and Rugby ex-public schoolboys who after their years at Oxford or Cambridge went into politics. Bowler hats, striped trousers and black lounge suits with umbrellas still dominated the City. The Superintendent of the British Museum Reading Room still sat at his desk in a top hat which he raised whenever a lady approached him to seek his advice over a difficulty in the catalogue. Sir Austen Chamberlain [1863–1937], the former conservative Foreign Secretary, complete with monocle, sat in the House of Commons in morning dress with tails, black in winter, grey in summer. He removed his top hat when he stood up to speak and whenever another speaker referred to him as the Right Honourable Gentleman, with a compliment. In the Clubs there were separate rooms in which to entertain a lady visitor. The lady had the vote at elections, she could even be a Member of Parliament, but she could not be a member of a political club. Where is that England now and where are the *neiges d'antan?*

English habits have changed enormously since my younger years, though the outward forms of the government system and of politics have not. The changes in various fields are in a way more striking in England, or for that matter in the whole of Western Europe than they are in the Socialist countries. The London I knew between 1934 and 1940 was still to some extent Victorian. The smoke of its coal could be smelled in its fog. It was still to a considerable extent lighted and partly heated by gas. Its hotel rooms and its humbler houses had their gas meters, in the slot of which you had to put pennies or shillings. It still had its slums, its cheap and rather filthy lodgings. Its people were very English. Some of them had never crossed the Channel, the geography of others began east of Suez, and they knew little of Europe. The upper strata had their school ties, their clubs, the lower ones their pubs. The intellectuals were people who never played darts in English pubs but had picked up communism and psychoanalysis in the Romanisches Café in Berlin; sometimes, although less frequently, right-wing ideologies at the Café Flore and the Les Deux Magots in Paris, or surrealism in the Montparnasse cafés.

I did not understand much of the specifically English spirit until I had lived some three or four years in England. When I was still very young, about sixteen or seventeen, I read the English philosophers Locke and Hume in translation, as well as Carlyle and Macaulay. I have already told how Sándor Hevesi, father of my schoolfriend András and Director of the National Theatre, had introduced me to Shaw and Gilbert Keith Chesterton; he introduced them to me as a counterpoison against the Fabian ideology and the synthetic philosophy of Herbert Spencer, of which Jászi, Róbert Braun and Rusztem Vámbéry were the Hungarian exponents. It was in this way that I had my first bits of intellectual information on England, apart from the ten or twelve Shakespeare plays I had had seen at the National Theatre in Budapest, and the advice one of my teachers gave me to dip into Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and Ralph Waldo Emerson's American essays. With the help of translations and dictionaries, I finally managed to read English, but I was not a fluent speaker until much later. When I took up Emerson again in London in order to understand something of America after my English experience, he convinced me that the Americans were not barbarians, but somehow continued the English tradition on the other side of the Atlantic.

I had two sources of information on America in the 1920s and 1930s: Jászi and Mihály Károlyi. Jászi claimed that America will save whatever is worth saving in Western civilisation – he was inclined to accept the prophecies of Oswald Spengler on Western decadence, although the remedies suggested by Spengler, Prussian discipline and ruthlessness, were hateful to him. Károlyi was very knowledgeable on America because from his youth onwards he had made some half a dozen trips to the United States, and had many American acquaintances and friends. Curiously enough, Károlyi, with all his pro-Soviet and pro-communist leanings, kept all his old aristocratic prejudices against the taste of democracy; with few exceptions, he thought the Americans were vulgarians, they spoke too loudly, they made tactless remarks, they exhibited feelings which should be kept private. Worst of all they were unable to respect anybody's privacy, and this was the one thing Károlyi could not bear. After one of Wickham Steed's Saturday parties at which Dorothy Thompson, whom I had first met in Berlin when she was still married to Sinclair Lewis, and who was at that time a celebrated journalist, though possibly forgotten now, was one of the guests.[186] I was walking part of the way home with Károlyi, who was on one of his frequent trips to London and staying at a Bayswater hotel. I remarked that Dorothy Thompson was very knowledgeable, not only on German affairs of the pre-Hitler years she had witnessed in Berlin, but also on the German classics of the last century. To this Károlyi replied: "Dorothy is an exception, a civilised American. I am not so sure that Sinclair Lewis is one, though he writes well on the American 'Barbarians' and often says the truth." I said that although I was not a very keen reader of modern novels, I preferred Sinclair Lewis to a celebrated German bore such as Thomas Mann, to which Károlyi replied: "You must nonetheless admit that what you call 'German bores' were people of civilised taste and not vulgarians."

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[186] Dorothy Thompson (1893–1961), 'the First Lady of American Journalism', was married to Sinclair Lewis between 1928 and 1942.

Bloomsbury was the first English atmosphere which I became acquainted with. In the first eighteen months or so of my London existence, I lived in various boarding houses where bed and breakfast cost about £1 a week (you could live on £3 a week in those days) and where the rooms might, or might not, have a gas fire and where there was a public breakfast room. They were in Tavistock Square, Brunswick Square, Guildford Street, and places that I have forgotten, until I finally settled at Nos. 28–29 Cartwright Gardens (later demolished by a bomb in the war) which I only left to go to the Army Training Camp at Camberley in Surrey in the summer of 1940 as a volunteer in the Free French Forces of General de Gaulle. Thus, I had six years in Bloomsbury, with the British Museum Reading Room and Library at hand. Nowadays London University has expanded into the Squares, there are many new bookshops, the old-fashioned English tearooms characteristic of the old Bloomsbury have gone and are replaced by Italian espressos, and this part of London has become a kind of Quartier Latin – except that even the British Museum is only two centuries old, while the real Quartier Latin was two centuries old even in the days of Villon.

Institutions looking after political refugees (mostly Germans in those days) were all based in Bloomsbury: Woburn House, Woburn Place for the German–Jewish institutions; Friends House (the Quakers) under its pacifist Secretary John Fletcher looked after other refugees. Mary Trevelyan at Student Movement House in Russell Square looked after the younger people (not only Germans but Indians and Africans). The old Royal Hotel had a café called Bogey's Bar and this was my meeting place with George Jászi and György Lányi, at that time undergraduates at the London School of Economics (Jászi having asked me to keep contact with his son; György Lányi was the cousin of Elisabeth Gémes, later Kolnai). Here too I met Róbert Vámbéry and Clara (not yet his wife), Aurel Kolnai on his two visits to England in 1937–1938, Pál Kecskeméti, still *en poste* in Berlin with the United Press of America, under safe American protection, but making one or two trips to London between 1935 and 1937, partly on business and partly to see his sister-in-law and her husband Professor Karl Mannheim, with whom I had little in common, although I knew him. Bogey's Bar and Witley Court Bar opposite were alternate meeting places. One of the younger participants was Éva Károlyi, then working as a junior secretary at the Refugees Service at Friends House. Arthur Koestler came to Witley Court before he went to Spain in 1936, also Czesław Jeśman [1912–1987], the Polish expert on British Imperial affairs.

In the old Imperial hotel (now demolished and re-built), very Victorian and Empire building in style, including a Turkish bath of which I was an enthusiastic customer, I used to have drinks with Giuseppe Emmanuele Modigliani and Pietro Nenni when they came to London on trips from Paris, also with Dino Rondani, the former Italian Member of Parliament, Stanley Richardson, Cambridge poet and newspaper correspondent on foreign affairs (later an RAF officer and killed by a bomb in a London restaurant while on leave).[187] Still in Bloomsbury, I had dinners in a Kingsway restaurant with Lorenzo Taezaz [1900–1947], Foreign Minister to the Emperor Haile Selassie, and his friends, amongst them the later Ambassador Emmanuel Abraham [1913–2016].

Finally, another centre of the Bloomsbury set of political exiles was the house of Countess Priuli, where I became friends with her son Ricardo, the painter, and her daughter Francesa, then lecturing at the Italian College in Holborn nearby. It was in this house that I had many conversations on the situation in Italy with the anti-Fascist exile group, and also with Professor G. N. Orsini, an anti-Fascist though still teaching at Florence University.

Naturally the exchange of news and messages at all these meeting places was vital to what I was writing and lecturing about concerning Hungary and Danubian affairs in general. Later on, during my war service in the Direction Générale des Etudes et Recherches in Duke St. London, all this information was incorporated in the reports I wrote for the information of General de Gaulle, who, I was told, read them with interest.

Hungarian visitors still came every now and then to London until 1938. I also had some fairly regular correspondence with friends in Hungary and Vienna, so that I remained informed on the situation from the Danubian side, and I passed on this information to British people who were, I knew, in close touch with government circles in Whitehall. These were Professor Robert W. Seton-Watson, whose books *Britain and the Dictators* and *Perfidious Albion?* had just appeared; George P. Gooch [1873–1968], the editor of *The Contemporary Review* (which published several of my political commentaries over the years); John W. Rose [1885–1968], the Director of the London School of Slavonic Studies and an influential member of Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs) which became during the war the FORD, that is, the Foreign Office Research Department. In this department, 'Elemér' Macartney[188] covered Hungary, William Mc. C. Stewart covered France and with him I subsequently had to have many conversations. John W. Rose covered Poland and Robert W. Seton-Watson the successor states of old Austria–Hungary. Arnold Toynbee covered Greece; I met him, but he was just an acquaintance. I also gave information to Rennie Smith [1888–1962], Labour Member of Parliament, and a specialist on German problems, whose Friends of Europe Society issued regular bulletins of information on the German preparations for war. All knowledgeable people in England were convinced that war was coming, if not in 1938, then at the most two years later. For my part, in my extensive correspondence, I did my test to convince people in Budapest and Vienna that Britain would eventually act, despite appearances to the contrary.

In 1936 when I still as yet had little experience of England, I gave several lectures on topical issues (Hitler and Austria, the consequences of the Ethiopian War, the possibilities of further Nazi expansion in Central Europe, Catholic and Protestant resistance to Hitler etc.) to a City Club. I never knew who recommended me as a lecturer – perhaps William Gillies [1885–1958], chief adviser to the Labour Party International Department, perhaps it was Rennie Smith [1885–1962], or Lionel Aird [1902–1990], the General Secretary of the East–West Fellowship. In those days I worked for all three organisations, translating German documents and compiling various brochures on European affairs, besides writing in *Contemporary Review, Daily Herald, Time and Tide* and once or twice in the Conservative *Spectator.* I also submitted various memoranda to Chatham House at the request of Seton-Watson and John W. Rose, mostly on Hungarian and Danubian questions in general. I was also a tutor-lecturer on international affairs for the Workers' Educational Association from 1936–1938.

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[187] John Henry Richardson (1911–1941) was poet with close contacts to Federico García Lorca and Luis Cernuda, Spanish authors, and generally, to Spanish culture. That he was an RAF pilot, could not be verified.

[188] Menczer plays with historian Carlile *Aylmer* Macartney's middle name (1895–1975), as Elemér is a Hungarian name, and Macartney was a supporter of the Hungarian 'cause'.

I was hardly any more in those days the conventional sort of continental socialist. My views had always been highly unorthodox and the only circle which I could join in England in those days was one which was actively hostile to Mussolini and Hitler. Also, outside the Labour Party in England, there was no visible and tangible anti-fascism until the annexation of Austria and the Munich crisis. I learned a lot about the Anglican Church in England and about England itself from these circles and they often asked me subsequently to contradict in my lectures the pacifist speakers who were so active and so harmful in those years, since they encouraged Hitler to think a British mobilisation would have no serious effect, because many young men were conscientious objectors.

My own private research work was on the European Democratic Committee of Kossuth, Mazzini and Ledru-Rollin [1807–1874], which had been set up in London in 1852 and I intended to write a book on these London exiles. Although I never finished it, I collected a rich material. There were practical difficulties. Professor Seton-Watson, who directed my research at the School of Slavonic Studies had no funds to help me; moreover, as my conclusions led me to sympathise less and less with their revolution of 1848–1849, his own interest in me waned. Lastly, Mr Alexander Henderson who translated my first three chapters from German (I was not then able to write in English) had to leave England on a job for Reuters. So, all my research went into the lectures I gave to the Workers' Educational Association, Student Movement House, etc. In the autumn of 1935, during Mussolini's war, I wrote an essay for Vámbéry's review on *Western Civilisation. An Attempt at a Definition.*[189] This was incorporated, with due acknowledgement, in Aurel Kolnai's book *The War Against the West* (published by Gollancz, London in 1938). Incidentally, this was the germ of what later became my book *Harvest and Waste. A Study of Western Culture,* taken from my Journals and put together in the 1970s.[190]

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[189] The book could not be traced.

[190] The book remains a manuscript in Menczer's Nachlass.

Chapter 15

Wickham Steed and His Circle

The influence of Henry Wickham Steed,[191] formerly foreign editor of the London *Times,* on Danubian affairs was considerable, for it was he who saw our main weakness, our nationalities problem, and exploited it during the First World War when he was already a well-known name. I will therefore give a detailed picture of him, also because it was at his famous Saturday parties at Lansdowne House, Holland Park that I met for the first time interesting people who became my friends.

Wickham Steed was made foreign editor of the *Times* when Lord Northcliffe [Alfred Charles William Harmsworth, 1865–1922], since the 1890s the head of the press group *Daily Mail* and *Evening News,* took control of this leading English daily during the First World War. As is well known, Lord Northcliffe was the effective organiser of propaganda intended mainly for America and other neutral countries in 1915–1916, explaining the war aims of Great Britain. With his twenty years' experience as a *Times* correspondent in Vienna, Berlin, Paris and Rome, Wickham Steed's influence was paramount when the war came.

In his physical appearance, Wickham Steed was an impressive figure. Very tall, with a goatee beard like King Charles I in the Van Dyke portrait, he still dressed in Edwardian elegance in the 1930s – white silk tie and white spats over his black patent evening shoes. He used a monocle and not spectacles when he read out something to his guests. He spoke French and German, and I think Italian also, as well as he did his native English, with an accent that was cosmopolitan rather than characteristically English.

It was at Lansdown House that I met Maurice Schumann,[192] then the London correspondent of the official French news agency the Agence Havas, later in the war *la voix de la France Libre* on the British radio, and finally Foreign Minister of France under President de Gaulle. I also met there Jan Masaryk, at that time Minister Plenipotentiary of Czechoslovakia to the Court of St James.[193] I knew him for ten years, right up to his departure from London in 1945, and had many talks with him on political matters when I was on the Free French État Major Particulier at Duke St. London. We never discussed personal matters, his or mine, always politics (unless ladies were present, in which case we came to literature, travel, music and other neutral topics). On two or three occasions I met there Count Carlo Sforza [1872–1952], Foreign Minister before Mussolini's rise to power, then once again Foreign Minister of Italy after Mussolini's fall. Grigory Constantinescu, another habitué was, at that time, First Secretary at the Romanian Embassy and after the war an exile in London, so that I met him again frequently at our Club, the Allied Circle in Mayfair. He was a literary amateur as well as a diplomat, and gave lectures on Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. Once or twice in the Steed salon I had talks with Elie Halévy [1870–1937], a French expert on England and America (but less famous than his brother Daniel, who had been a close friend of the poet Charles Péguy and a cofounder of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*). André Siegfried [1875–1959], professor at the École Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris and an expert on America, came to London from time to time and was a guest of Wickham Steed. Raymond Lacoste, a very knowledgeable reporter on Balkan and Near East affairs was at that time the London correspondent of the *Echo de Paris* and with him I had a long acquaintance lasting into the post-war years. There was an Italian, naturalised British, Dr Giordani, a Harley St. specialist who had many members of the diplomatic corps in London as his patients. He was a non-fascist in those days, rather than an active anti-fascist. Another figure was Ernest Toller [1893–1939], the German playwright and refugee from Hitler, originally a communist and later an independent left-wing author in the years when I knew him. Demetrios Kaklamanos [1872–1949], former Minister Plenipotentiary of Greece in London and St Petersburg, and in his own country a figure close to Venizelos, had settled in London after retiring from diplomacy and was an interesting figure in those years, with many good stories. During my years at the Holland Park salon, English politicians were not particularly prominent, since Steed preferred a cosmopolitan crowd, through having lived so long abroad as a foreign correspondent.

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[191] Henry Wickham Steed (1871–1956), journalist and historian, exerted considerable influence on British politics concerning Balkan and Central European affairs, especially during and after the First World War.

[192] Maurice Schumann (1911–1998) was statesman (Foreign Minister of France), journalist (BBC), a Christian Socialist politician, and though a volunteer in de Gaulle's forces, was later a political opponent of the General.

[193] Jan Masaryk (1886–1948) was son of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a career diplomat, though with unusual mannerisms, and later foreign minister until his mysterious death in Prague (suicide or murder).

Conversation was more often in French than in English. Only from the very old habitués of Wickham Steed's 'Saturdays' at Holland Park between the two wars, could one hear the old diplomatic language spoken with an accent that betrayed the cosmopolitan education of the old style, when conversation in England related rather to the era of Edward VII than to present realities – to that fairytale England which ruled the waves, its Indian realm with the Maharajahs and the jungles, that fabulous England of Kipling and of our schoolbooks. Some of the diplomats present usually wore dinner jackets; Steed himself did not, with delicate tact, for otherwise his guests would have had to do so in those days, and some of them could not have afforded it.

Wickham Steed disliked everybody who was not just a passive listener to his brilliant talk, so that his younger guests, such as Maurice Schumann, Raymond Lacoste or myself had to be experienced Europeans and polyglot speakers, but otherwise our very kind host preferred us to keep silent in all the languages we knew, while he did all the talking on politics himself, for monologue was his speciality. Speaking about five hundred words a minute, he was somewhat offended if anybody interrupted him. He was witty, well-read, many-sided in his culture and information, a great European of the old style, and almost a living encyclopaedia of contemporary history. He was also a fine English patriot, faithful to the traditions of his country and to the English principles of liberty, in many ways an admirable man and a first-rate political and diplomatic brain, though not very English, however in his private habits, manners and tastes, except perhaps that his very English eccentricity was to play the cosmopolitan if any English person was present and to defend with great vigour any English institutions (the Monarchy, the Church of England, Parliament, etc.) if any continentals were listening to him. He had the stuff of an actor in him, like most outstanding Englishmen.

He was generous in his hospitality and some of the ‘Saturdays’ were a great experience for the newcomer. He was vain and egocentric and much of his serious thought was spoilt by exaggerated self-assertion: “When Prince Bulow asked me in the Kaiser’s name…” “When I saw Bismarck and he told me…” “When walking along the Promenade in Karlsbad I met King Edward and he called me over to ask…” “When Marshal Foch read my editorial and he remarked…” All the great turns of events happened at such moments and things went wrong because Steed’s advice was not taken. Otherwise, his sense of humour was one of his best qualities. The newcomer enjoyed his stories; if you heard them for the twentieth time, they became boring. I only knew him of course in his sixties and seventies, and at that age he began to fear that younger people no longer knew who he was and what he had been once upon a time. This fear moved him sometimes to exhibitions of childish vanity, though he still wrote in the thirties some very good articles every now and then in *Contemporary Review, Nineteenth Century and After* and in American reviews, which were collected in what was I think his last book published in 1939, on the eve of the war. I forgot the title, but I remember I reviewed it in *Free Europe.*

I saw Wickham Steed for the last time in the spring of 1948 at the memorial service in London for Jan Masaryk, but I had not seen him for many years before that. Our relations practically ceased in 1937 or 38, when at the age of sixty-eight he married the Honourable Violet Mason, daughter of Lord Blackford, former ambassador to Warsaw. The once famous Lansdowne House, Holland Park Saturday parties came to an end under the new management. Loló Vámbéry was one of the few old Saturday guests who saw Lansdowne House under its new lady; he told me that hardly a piece of the former furniture remained in the dining room or the drawing room since the death of Madame Rose, Steed’s Egeria and hostess for three decades.[194]

At least twenty years older than Steed, Madame Rose was a Piedmontese married to a French vicomte; she was widowed at twenty and never remarried. Under the signature ‘Clarence Rose’ she was one of the music critics of the *Times.* When I knew her, she was a bit *gaga* and Steed chivalrously kept her in a flat next to his own. Steed’s name did not appear in her long obituary in the *Times* for the simple reason that he wrote it.

As to the part Wickham Steed played as the foremost journalist of his day in the famous creation of the Czechoslovak state of Masaryk and Beneš, I have written much about this in my Journals and elsewhere. Briefly, Steed’s predilection for the Czechs, rather than for the Hungarians or the Germans, had its origin in the Czech nationality of the Duchess of Hohenberg, Francis Ferdinand’s wife. Well-informed as he was, Steed told King Edward VII, for some years England’s only consistent diplomatic thinker, that after the death of Emperor Francis Joseph, the new men under Francis Ferdinand would chiefly be the Czechs. In those days, he did not anticipate the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, but rather a reformed one. Then when the First World War came, Steed dropped his propaganda for all the new men he had foreseen, with the exception of the Czechs, and especially Masaryk, whose cause he sponsored in England. As is well known, when the Russians surrendered in December 1917, Masaryk was sent to Siberia with American money, propaganda facilities, etc., and with Allied approval, to prevent the return home from Russia of roughly two million prisoners of war to Germany and Austria–Hungary (who would have provided reinforcements on the Western Front for the Central Powers) and to form in Siberia a Czech Legion from amongst the Czech prisoners of war. Steed sponsored the Czech Committee in London – although Allied support for the Czechs was not yet official until the Peace of Brest-Litovsk – and when the Czech Legion in Siberia did in fact prevent the prisoners of war from return, the Czech national cause gathered momentum.

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[194] The nymph Egeria was advisor to Numa Pompilius, second king of Rome, hence her name refers to a female counsellor.

The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 was not very popular with immigrants settled in America such as the Slovaks, who did not have to do three years of compulsory military service in their new country as they had had to do under the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy. They were firm isolationists, just like the American Irish, who disliked the idea of America helping Britain. To counteract this isolationist trend in America, Wickham Steed was sent on lecture tours to the United States in 1916–1917 to propagate the slogan that the Allies were fighting for the defence of the small nations. Such a slogan was very welcome to President Wilson, who at that date was not yet promising independence to Slovaks, Croats, and other subject nations of Austria–Hungary, but only autonomous evolution, a somewhat vague term. He thought that a peace was still possible without the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the memorable Fourteen Points of President Wilson in January 1918, there was only a proposal to restore to Poland ‘undoubtedly Polish territories’, and a similar proposal that Austria should make some concessions to Italy concerning territories that were ‘undoubtedly Italian’; further, that countries like Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania, which had been occupied by the Central Powers, should have their independence restored. There was no question in the Fourteen Points of Czechoslovakia, or Yugoslavia, or Greater Romania.

With his lecture tours in America on the subject of Central and Eastern Europe, Wickham Steed became a useful auxiliary in creating popularity for President Wilson, just as Masaryk, returning from Siberia, was useful to him. As I have often said and written in my reviews in many countries, I am absolutely certain that President Wilson had not the slightest idea of how to apply what eventually became known as the principle of self-determination, and what the new national states would mean in practice. But things came as they came, and Wickham Steed played a part in this *comédie humaine,* which was a great tragedy, and the world is still bearing the consequences, though it has lost every sense of tragedy and greatness.

Later on, in the 1930s, Steed never sank to the level of Mussolini’s admirers. He was an enemy of such interwar fashions and in his opposition to Munich in 1938 there was the genuine indignation and dignity of an Englishman who felt disgusted and ashamed and who incidentally knew perfectly well that our time, for which the deal at Munich was concluded, was to be six months or a year. The only people in England who to my mind knew what was at stake with the rise of the Nazi power were Conservatives such as Churchill, Duff Cooper, Eden and Vansittart, and my only contact with them in the years leading up to Munich was through Wickham Steed.

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Chapter 16

The Approaching Doom 1935–1939

When we met Ilona Fodor in Paris in May 1976, she showed me the typescript of the autobiography of my old fellow prisoner of 1922–1923, Ernő Normai, now living in Australia. The Museum of the Working Class Movement did not, however, want to publish it.[195] Laci [László] Wessely had also mentioned this manuscript to me the previous year in Budapest. I did not have time to do more than glance at it in Paris, but I looked at the section in which he describes me as having been the secretary of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. Since this legend crops up from time to time amongst Hungarians, I had better state the real facts.

In 1935–1936, I was convinced that Mussolini's defeat in Ethiopia would lead to his downfall and that this downfall was our chance – very likely our last one – to avoid a second world war. Mussolini served as a model for Hitler. Hitler's coming to power in 1933 could only have one meaning, that Germany was preparing a new war; but Hitler would not dare to begin a new war without at least one major ally and that could only be fascist Italy. Mussolini's fall would have been followed by Hitler's fall. And this could only benefit Hungary, as well as the rest of Europe.

Emperor Haile Selassie arrived in London in mid-May 1936. I got in touch with his staff, introduced by Sylvia Pankhurst (daughter of the famous suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst),[196] who edited a little paper called *New Times and Ethiopia News,* in which I wrote because it was the only uncompromisingly anti-fascist paper appearing in English in London. I almost immediately became on terms of intimate friendship with Lorenzo Taezaz, Ethiopia's delegate to Geneva. He was an outstandingly able young man, a Catholic of the Uniate Coptic Rite, born in Eritrea and educated at Italian missionary schools. The Italian administration of those days, however, did not allow young Ethiopian students to go to Italy for any higher education, unless they were going to become priests, so many Catholic Eritreans went to Addis Ababa, from where the emperor sent them to French Universities, in particular to Montpellier or Grenoble to study at the Faculty of Law. Thus, Taezaz and other Ministers of the Emperor whom I knew, Volde Ghiurghis [Wolde Giyorgis Wolde Yohannes, 1901–1976], Ephraim Mehden, etc., were in 1936 young men in their thirties speaking perfectly fluent French and Italian, and sometimes English as well, although Lorenzo only started to learn this language in

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[195] They were indeed published: *Beatrice egyik apródja* [A Page of Beatrice]. Budapest: Magvető, 1987. Normai, a communist, did not have a high opinion of Menczer. He writes that Menczer was playing the absent-minded professor, and also noting that Menczer, a scion of a rich family, was somewhat alien to real life, and did not care about the trifles of life. However, he adds maliciously, Menczer must have inherited the realism of his Swabian ancestors, having, so the rumour had it in Paris (1939), seized the position of Haile Selassie's private secretary (p. 44). Normai, who also fought in the French army, and landed later in Australia, writes that he had not heard from Menczer ever since.

[196] Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960) was herself member of the suffragette movement, a pacifist and leftist politician, who later settled in Ethiopia.

England. He had been trained at Montpellier by Professor Jules Valéry, the international lawyer and brother of the poet Paul Valéry.

In long and frequent conversations with Taezaz between 1936 and 1939, we worked out a new policy for Ethiopia. My memoranda in the Ethiopian archives are very likely lost now, since the recent upheavals in that country, but full details of my activities and my memoranda are given in my Journals, and certain documents in my possession I deposited in the Budapest archives [Hungarian Academy of Sciences] in 1978. I exposed my views on the situation in Ethiopia and in Africa as a whole and in the Middle East in Vámbéry's review *Századunk* in 1937 and once more shortly after the Second World War in the same review (then edited by Imre Csécsy)[197] and this may have given Ernő Normai and some other Hungarians the impression that I was Haile Selassie's Secretary.

In fact, the emperor knew all about my relations with Taezaz and Volde Ghiurghis. I saw the emperor himself several times between 1936 and June 1940 (when I left London for Africa with General de Gaulle's Free French Forces) but my conversations with him were more or less conventional. I advised his ministers, he read my minutes and sometimes made comments in the margin, as I was told by Taezaz. Politics, however, he only discussed with two men whom the British Foreign Office appointed as his semi-official advisers during his years of exile in London. These were Sir Sidney Barton [1876–1946], the former British Minister Plenipotentiary in Addis Ababa and Professor Stanley Jevons, a scientist who had taught at an Indian University.

After the Second World War, my wife and I were invited to various receptions at the Ethiopian Embassy in London over the years, but it was not until the reception given at the Embassy on the occasion of the Emperor's State Visit to London in 1952 that I saw my old friend Volde Ghiurghis again. I was even invited by Richard Pankhurst (Sylvia's son and head of the Research Department at the University at Addis Ababa) to take a research job working on the documents of the Italian war, but I declined, not wishing to cut myself off from Europe for several years. Besides this, with the exception of Emmanuel Abraham, Ambassador of Ethiopia in London, my old friends were by then dead (Taezaz very prematurely from tuberculosis); Ethiopia was also by then part of the Third World for which I did not feel any particular enthusiasm. Finally, with Mussolini's fall, the old anti-fascist problem of earlier years had become a fading memory.

So, to sum up the whole story, it could be said that I was a sort of *éminence grise* to the emperor's cause, because it was also my cause and ultimately Hungary's cause. I was very sad when the upheavals of 1974 occurred, for Haile Selassie was not only a true statesman of Africa in this century, but he was a great man, whose fall was a tragedy. At that date I had not, however, had any contact with Ethiopia for over ten years before his fall, and I am not at all informed on the last phase of his era. I note all this in case Ernő Normai's recollections are ever published.[198] Moreover, I was told in Budapest that there are many letters of mine in Imre Csécsy's Legacy in the archives, which possibly relate to the Ethiopian crisis of 1935–1936. Gömbös, then Prime Minister of Hungary supported Mussolini in Geneva against the sanctions imposed. Paul Hevesy, Hungary's permanent Delegate to the League of Nations, left the Diplomatic Service over this issue, unwilling to serve General Gömbös's pro-fascist leanings. In the Hungarian press, it was only Vámbéry's review, later edited by Csécsy, which stood up to the General. I encouraged him to persevere in this line, I sent him ample information concerning the Ethiopian war of Mussolini (amongst other subjects) to use in his campaign.

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[197] Imre Csécsy (1893–1961) was a liberal-radical democratic politician, member of the Galilei Circle and later President of the Society of Social Sciences, Jászi's secretary and 'representative' in Hungary. He did not emigrate and finished his life in Budapest while translating Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws.*

[198] See footnote 195.

I knew of course fully well that Hungary was condemned by her geographical position to keep on good terms with the Axis powers and above all that Hungary was a victim of the treaty system of Versailles–Trianon and thus could not be a defender of the status quo. I did not think, however, that there was any reality behind the League of Nations, and my main thesis was that England and France had an opportunity through the Ethiopian crisis to win the friendship of the nations of the Middle East, later called the 'Third World' (in the original meaning of this expression, i.e. neither members of the NATO, nor of the Warsaw Pact) to prepare the gradual emancipation of colonies, protectorates and mandated territories of the imperial powers. It was in this sense that I advised my Ethiopian friends, and indeed they were inclined to see Haile Selassie as the leading figure in the forthcoming emancipation of the Middle East States of Africa, as the Arab States were in sympathy with the Ethiopian cause.

One of Mihály Károlyi's frequent trips to London coincided with the beginning of the Ethiopian crisis (his elder daughter, as I have said, had a job in London, his son Adam was studying aeronautics at a Technical College in Southampton). Over drinks in one of his clubs, he gave me the information that the sanctions decided at Geneva in October 1935 would not be seriously applied. The decision had been taken to satisfy that section of public opinion which took the League of Nations seriously, but the British and other governments, especially the French Government, did not wish for a breach with Italy and Mussolini's downfall. Károlyi was no longer politically active, and this was an unusual view at the time, but events proved that Károlyi's information was correct. Some people in government circles possibly believed that fascist Italy could be used against Hitler in the next crisis, when he carried out his threat to annex Austria. I never believed this. I was sure the two adventurers were in solidarity one with the other, and that Mussolini was more of an adventurer than an Italian patriot.

With the old Károlyi émigré group long since dispersed, and the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme no longer actively functioning on account of the changing world situation, Rusztem Vámbéry was in the 1930s my chief link with the anti-fascist and later anti-Nazi resistance in Hungary.

My old friend Rusztem Vámbéry was a remarkable man. He had served as a young man in the Imperial and Royal Artillery in the 1890s during his year of military service, and he completed three or four periods of service in the reserve with commissioned rank. He was called up in 1914, but being already forty-two in that year, he belonged to the oldest age group and so was employed on lighter duties, notably on liaison work with our then Allies, the Turks. The name of Ármin Vámbéry [1832–1913], the famous

Orientalist who died in 1913 was still well known to most Turks of that generation and the Austro–Hungarian authorities thought that his son Rusztem's mission to Istanbul would be a great success with the pashas. This could well have been so – Rusztem spoke Turkish and since his childhood he had often stayed in the Padishah's capital – but he was not at all enthusiastic over our alliance with the Kaiser. He was a godson of King Edward VII. (Old Ármin was vehemently pro-British, in fact, an empire-builder in the service of Victorian England. His politics were those of Gyula Andrássy the Elder: he counted on an Anglo–Russian conflict in which Austria–Hungary and the Osman Empire would be Britain's Allies against the Tsar. That war never came. Britain chose the Russian alliance instead, as Kaiser Wilhelm was so foolish as to appear the greater and more immediate menace to the British.) Rusztem had interesting recollections on late Victorian England, on the Kaiser's Germany (he had studied for a time at Leipzig) and especially on Turkey under Abdul Hamid II and in the period of the Young Turks regime of Enver Pasha, Talaat Pasha and the other Young Turkish revolutionaries of 1908.

Although Rusztem Vámbéry was a professor of law for some years, his real home was never the faculty but in the law courts at famous trials. He started this second career when the faculty suspended him from his chair at the beginning of the Horthy era in the 1920s. The law regulating the legal profession expressly stated that a Professor of Law at any faculty (or any Academy of Law, which was a little less than a faculty) could practise as a barrister, even without the special examination for the Bar, since a Chair of Law was a higher qualification. Thus, at the age of forty-eight Vámbéry started a new career in 1920 and was at the Bar that he had the greatest successes of his life and revealed his whole personality and originality, and that he became in politics what the British Minister Plenipotentiary in Budapest, Sir Patrick Ramsey [1879–1962], called a mighty one-man party. During the years of the political trials, Rusztem Vámbéry edited the review *Századunk* and the best things in that review were what he wrote himself, although he had scarcely any evolution from his ideological position of 1900 and the one-sidedness and narrowness of the progressives of the old Society of Social Science, he was, unlike most of them (with the exception of Jászi) lively, personal, often witty and a brilliant polemical defender of the liberals of the nineteenth century and the radicals of about 1900.

I can reveal here something which may interest a future historian of inter-war Europe (the full story of which I give in an Appendix,[199] in order not to distort the proportions of my narrative). Rusztem Vámbéry acted as defence counsel in the second trial of Mátyás Rákosi in 1934,[200] a trial which was a typical act of stupidity on the part of General Gömbös, Prime Minister at that time. Rákosi had been arrested eight years previously, when he had returned clandestinely from Russia in order to organise, or re-organise, a Communist Party in Hungary. He could have been deported years earlier, nothing would have been simpler as he was a Soviet citizen and Hungary and the Soviet Union had established diplomatic relations in 1932. Instead of this, a second trial was staged concerning Rákosi's activities as Vice-Commissar of the People in 1919, in Béla Kun's time.[201] Naturally, this was absurd. If the activities of 1919 had to come up again, there were fewer witnesses available in 1934 or 35 than there would have been in 1926 or 1927, when he was already in prison serving his sentence for illegal activities. Besides this, the trial was contrary to the one sensible thing in the Treaty of Trianon, Article 76, which obliged all governments of the successor states to stop further proceedings against citizens who acted for any kind of sovereignty different from the one recognised in the treaties. Therefore, when the Treaty of Trianon was ratified in June 1921, no trial could legally take place concerning the actions of the Red Army of 1919, which fought the Czechs and the Romanians (whether for the Apostolic Kingdom of Hungary or the People's Republic, or the Hungarian Soviets, did not matter in this case).

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[199] The manuscript does not contain this.

[200] Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971) was the 'Hungarian Stalin', responsible for the era between 1948–1953, after which he gradually lost power. He died in the Soviet Union, as János Kádár never allowed him to return to Hungary.

Vámbéry, Geoffrey Ring, K.C. and also a French lawyer Maitre Villard asked me for a historical view on this point. I summed up my views in a memorandum. (My research in the Chatham House Library, the British press and into Professor Harold Temperley's documents of the peace conference are given in detail in the Appendix.[202]) It needed the stupidity of Gömbös to argue that the jurisdiction of the early 1920s with all their iniquities were still valid in 1934–1935. Yet this is what the second conviction and his further term of imprisonment implied. The *Manchester Guardian,* the English liberal paper, took up the case in an editorial of which I was the real author, but which Geoffrey Bing took from my memorandum. Finally, Rákosi was released on the outbreak of the war and allowed to go back to Russia, but by then General Gömbös was dead.

During that 1934 case, I asked Vámbéry what sort of a man Rákosi was. "The man does not matter", he replied. "We have to fight Gömbös and the principle that the decree concerning the repression of Communist acts was still valid in 1934–1935. Gömbös is a misfortune for Hungary, he is preparing for Hungary's entry into the coming war on the wrong side and the Rákosi case is probably an opportunity to bring him down." This was my own view too.

When Vámbéry came to London, he used to stay in a hotel in Montague St., Bloomsbury. He made a couple of short visits to London between 1935 and 37, then he stayed in England for a few weeks in the autumn of 1938, after Munich, on his way to the United States. I arranged interviews for him with William Guillies, then head of the International Department of the Labour Party (today he would be called Shadow, i.e. Opposition Foreign Secretary), George P. Gooch, editor of the *Contemporary Review* which was in sympathy with my views on Danubian problems, Sir Bernard Pares, the expert on Russian history, Professor John W. Rose of the School of Slavonic Studies, London University, Professor Robert W. Seton-Watson (one of the fathers of Czechoslovakia) – all old acquaintances of Károlyi, Jászi, Vámbéry and of myself; these were the men who formed the Chatham House Set of those days, that is to say, the official Government Research Department.

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[201] Rákosi was also commissar and for a short period commander of the Red Guard.

[202] The manuscript does not contain this.

I saw Vámbéry mostly in Oxford, where he had taken a service flat, rather than in London in 1938. By then the war looked a certainty to us, and the subject I went to Oxford to discuss with Rusztem was the raising of the Free Hungarian flag on the Allied side, within the scope of three eventualities: a) in agreement with the Teleki Government if Teleki resisted Nazi Germany; b) if Horthy and Teleki gave in to Nazi pressure against them; c) if the Horthy–Teleki Government was replaced by an Arrow Cross set, when we would work in collaboration with the new émigrés who supported Pál Teleki.

Few people were as hostile to the Horthy era as I had been, and if after 1938 I gave some support to the Hungarian regime in *Contemporary Review* and in *Free Europe,* this only referred to those men who made an effort to get Hungary out of the Nazi entanglement. I freely admit that Pál Teleki at the time of his second period of government in 1939–1941 was a totally different man from the Pál Teleki of 1920–1921. His stand against the Nazis was heroic, his suicide a gesture of truly Roman grandeur. The Hungarians of the late 1930s were altogether different men from those of the counter-revolution. Nevertheless, many things that I wrote and did in the years 1920 to 1926, or even 1938, I have no reason to regret, much as it cost me in my later years, for after all, I carry the wounds of our latent civil war throughout a lifetime, and they are the more painful because nobody is able at present to understand what it was all about.

Vámbéry knew that Tibor Eckhardt, formerly our opponent, and some of the Horthy men were already contemplating the possibility of setting up a Free Hungarian National Committee on the Allied side. We had not yet decided how far we could collaborate with them. He discussed the matter with Lord Vansittart [1881–1957], Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in a long interview, of which he gave me a detailed account at Oxford two or three weeks before the appearance of Chamberlain's umbrella, i.e. at the end of August, early September. At this particular lunch with Vámbéry and his wife Olga, I remember that his son Loló was present, and Clara, not yet Loló's wife, and at tea we were joined by Nicholas Kurti, the atomic physicist, who was working in an Oxford laboratory and was Loló's former schoolfriend in Budapest.[203] We also had contacts at this time, before and after the Czech crisis, with Jan Masaryk, Ambassador to the Court of St James. All our conversations concerned the attitude of the Hungarian Opposition in the case of war.

When Vámbéry sailed for America three or four weeks after Munich (he was sixty-seven and too old to start any further active resistance) I remained in London. I felt sure a Ribbentrop–Molotov agreement would come and when it did, in August 1939, I greeted the event almost with relief. Perhaps I was unaware of the British and French weaknesses. I felt sure that Britain and France would win the war, with some amount of American support, from the first moment onwards and with American intervention at a later stage. At any rate, I decided once again not to return to Hungary, in order to avoid being on the German–Italian side in the coming war.

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[203] Miklós Kürti (1908–1988), due to the *numerus clausus,* pursued his career in physics in the U.K., contributing also to the British atomic bomb, and becoming a professor at Oxford.

Between Munich and the outbreak of the war in September 1939, I sent in an application to the Ministry of Defence (stating my linguistic and other qualifications) to serve Britain in any capacity in the case of war. The Ministry's letter in reply informed me that I was on a special list of people qualified to serve and requested me at the same time to keep complete discretion about the existence of such a list. My connections with Chatham House I have already mentioned. In the interval between September 1939 and my departure for Africa in 1940 in the Free French Forces of General de Gaulle after the defeat of France, I had commissions to write memoranda and secret reports concerning Central Europe for the Ministry of Information and I also gave courses of lectures on the same subjects to the Workers' Educational Association classes and other associations. In the early phase of the war in 1939, Balliol College, Oxford, was the seat of Chatham House, now called the Foreign Office Research Department and I made several visits to Balliol to hand in memoranda and messages from Hungary, where I still had my contacts. It was also at this time in Oxford that I first met Carlile A. Macartney, the expert on Hungary, with whom I subsequently had a long friendship, lasting until his death in 1978.

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Chapter 17

Envoi

True life begins when earthly life comes to an end, and in the few things which in this life are done for the sake of the lasting glory of God, I had my share. A few stones in this terrestrial city I have recognised to be the stones of the City of God and I never refused to carry those stones on my shoulders, heavy as they may have been. I have known and seen two sorts of people: on the one hand those who were constructing the huge tower of Babel, on the other I have seen some people, few in number, who were building the City of God and who will inherit the earth.

So England is now my home, just as Rodosto was for Kelemen Mikes de Zágon some two hundred and fifty years ago, as he says in his *Epistles from Turkey* which I quoted earlier: "This is my home, Madame ma chére cousine, and my next one will be either Hungary or Heaven, for apart from those two places, I have no desire left for any other."[204]

Anybody who reads my Journals will notice that Hungary, even Austria–Hungary, has never left my thought. My publications dealt very frequently with a bygone era and a defunct Monarchy, and with the three generations which lived before the final catastrophe – which I saw as a boy of only sixteen years of age. Every literary vocation is fed by memories of the first twenty years of life and by some ancestral memories which were still lively enough in the preceding generation. Somehow, for some mysterious reason, we cannot change, but only grow older with our qualities and our faults, which are partly inherited and partly made by our early surroundings. A total and complete adaptation to new surroundings is only possible for people who have no inner life and who are entirely concentrated on external show and worldly success, which will be meaningless for the next generation.

I am glad to say that in this respect I never fell into the mood of eternal complaint and self-pity which is the curse of émigré activities. We – my companions of the old Károlyi group and my later companions and friends – tried to contribute to the life of the nations which gave us hospitality, and this was the best part, almost the only good part of our activities. I addressed, like my friends, British, French, German, Austrian, Spanish audiences, some of us American and Canadian ones, on our specifically Danubian problems. We spread in books, in reviews and in newspapers our special Hungarian experience and our values, we continued to produce something in our own language – perhaps only for a distant future. After all, in every language, a great deal of the achievement of authors, artists and thinkers was produced outside their own country, very often not even for political reasons.

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[204] Rodosto, today Tekirdağ in Turkey, was the last station of the wandering exiled group led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II (leader of the revolt against the Habsburgs put down in 1711). Kelemen Mikes was a loyal secretary to the Prince, survived him, and never returned to Transylvania, his homeland. His fictional correspondence with a cousin of him, mostly elegiacal, constitutes an important milestone in the developing Hungarian belles-lettres.

Now in this late twentieth century, politics are, at least for me, dull and tedious business. I can hardly understand today how politics could have filled my youth with so much passion. We have no Caesars any more worth the killing, but I suspect that we have even fewer Brutuses and Cassiuses. We have only that contemptible crowd which would applaud Mark Anthony when he discloses Caesar's will, a few minutes after they have applauded Caesar's murderers. As to Brutus and Cassius, they would earn handsome sums from the protest industry, and they would not risk a few years of psychiatric treatment which is now the fashionable sentence for killing.

The first and the best, of all refugee stories includes all other stories, even mine. It comes from Vergil Book II: "Infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem / Troianas ut opes et lamentabile regnum / Eruerint Danai quoque ipse miserrima vidi / Quorum pars magna fui." [Inexpressible is the pain which you order me to recount, O Queen, / I have to tell how the treasure of Troy, the unfortunate Kingdom / Was ruined by the Greeks, the very sad story I saw with my own eyes / And in which I played a great part.][205]

What lamentable falls have I seen in many realms, what plundering of riches in many cities, what smugglers of wooden horses have I met and how well and how well did they navigate, blinding Cyclops and enchanting nymphs of both sexes when they landed on various islands. What nymphomaniacs of both sexes have eaten their sex-analysing books, how many false copies of their own wooden horses have they sold, how many one-eyed Cyclops have they completely blinded by talking their jargon to them.

My own long story was not an Odyssey, but an Aeneid, a story of the honourable defeated. I was silenced whenever I tried to say: *Cognosce Ulyssem,* or give such reminders as *proximus iam ardet Ucalegon,* the next town to Troy [is already on fire]. The wooden horse dealers are still navigating all around us, still claiming that they are made of flesh. But I entered my old age with one negative result: I am still able to distinguish wood from flesh, I still have two eyes and I am not a Cyclops and my intellect has never yet fallen into the mania of the nymphs and still refuses what they try to offer.

Why did a Hungarian volunteer for the Free French Forces of General de Gaulle in 1940, instead of the British Army when he was already living in Britain? – my friends in Hungary and elsewhere may ask, and especially the younger generation. The answer lies in the upbringing and the historical background of men of my generation, now in their seventies, which is so different from that of today that the story is worth telling and ought not to be forgotten.

I was certainly not destined by my parents to be a legionary in the service of France. In the bourgeoisie, our French lessons began when we were very young, and when we were schoolboys, we were already reading seriously in French, even during the First World War when the Franco–Russian alliance on the one hand and the alliance of the Dual Monarchy with Hohenzollern Germany on the other, brought Hungary into a war which no Hungarian had ever wanted. Many of my family relations and all my father's friends felt a nostalgia throughout the war for Paris, which they often visited before 1914, and so as a boy I heard all their talk. At the Alliance Française I think it was, an institution situated in a pretty house in the district of the City Park (and of course closed down when war broke out) there were some twenty or thirty young French ladies who gave lessons in various Hungarian households. A principal supervised these "soldates inconnues de la civilisation française [the unknown female soldiers of civilisation]" who fought the good fight entrusted to them by their country. The University of Budapest had its Reader in French, while at the Eötvös College all the future professors of the Hungarian universities took lessons from the most important personage of the French colony in Budapest, the director of modern Literary Studies, who was nearly always a young agrégé recently qualified at the École Normale Supérieure. Amongst the Frenchmen of the Eötvös College were future literary celebrities: Jérôme Tharaud [1874–1953], André Thérive [1891–1967] for example, a future French Minister of Education Jean Mistler d'Auriol[206] and no doubt a great number of learned *savants* whose name I forget. The merit of winning our love for France belongs however to the young ladies mentioned above who taught very young boys and girls.

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[205] This translation seems to have been done by Menczer himself.

The propaganda which each of these young ladies made for her country, whether she was in an aristocratic or a bourgeois family, was all the more praiseworthy because it was quite spontaneous and completely unorganised. In the Hungary of those days (I was born in 1902) we learned good manners from the moment we were given into the care of Mademoiselle. She signified France to us. We must not shout, or cry, or appear at table with dirty hands; what would France say about our country if Mademoiselle reported such a thing? When we were out walking with her in the park, we had to walk on her left side because she belonged to the fair sex. "You do not carry a sword yet", my mother explained to me one day, "but one day you will be an officer, as your father was, and then Mademoiselle would be incommoded by a sword at your left side."

So, France became synonymous in our eyes with the fair sex; I leave the development of this theme to the Freudians. We only learned later on, when we were in the class of Rhetoric, that is to say at the age of fourteen or fifteen in the fifth year of the gymnasium, that the French language is not exclusively for the use of young ladies. Since the French Readers at the universities who were known to the older boys left Hungary to go to the war in 1914, boys of my generation were left with the memory of a France which was essentially feminine.

I do not claim that Hungary fought the war of 1914–1918 against her will, we knew well enough that the existence of Greater Hungary depended upon its outcome. We knew of the agitation in Romania and Serbia and who can be surprised that Hungary wanted to keep Transylvania and the Voivodina? These countries had belonged to her for centuries, Hungarian culture and traditions had formed them. Hardly anybody in Hungary would have wished to abandon a great heritage, of which the Hungarians are still today justly proud. As to Austria, neither the Hungarian aristocracy, nor the middle classes, nor even the partisans of Hungarian independence from Austria, wanted a complete rupture with Vienna. What they agreed on was a desire for a foreign policy based more on

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[206] Jean Mistrel (1897–1988) was not only cultural attaché in Budapest but began his novelist's career there, also writing the probably first French novel set in Hungary (*Ethelka.* Clamann Lévy, 1929).

Hungarian interests than on the inevitable Germanism of Austria. The Liberal Party of the pre-war years which was in power was, however, Germanophile. They considered that the restoration of the Hungarian Constitution in 1867 was due to Sadowa and Bismarck; they were wrong. The Austro–Hungarian Compromise of 1867 was the work of the most anti-Prussian statesman ever to govern Austria, Beust, and indirectly by Napoleon III, who offered a French alliance to Austria against Prussia on condition that the Habsburg Monarchy detached itself from its links with Germany, thus giving a greater emphasis to the Kingdom of Hungary. Ungrateful like all regimes once they are in power, Hungarian liberalism forgot its benefactor and after 1870 threw herself into the arms of the victor of Sedan.

Nonetheless, the French influence remained considerable in Hungary at the time of my childhood and youth; it is to be regretted that French politics did not use it better! Between 1906 and 1910 the coalition of the opposition parties was in power (the clericals, the Independence Party and the liberal dissidents). This period more or less coincided with the militant laicism of the French Republic. The French religious orders which had been dissolved, and especially the women's orders, went abroad and established themselves in Hungary under the powerful protection of Count Albert Apponyi, Minister of Education and principal representative in the government of the day of the great conservative and Catholic aristocracy. Hence a large proportion of girls from the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie went to the French nuns for their education, particularly to the Dames du Sacré Coeur. In spite of the guillotine of 1793, in spite of Sedan, in spite of the three Republics, a certain Hungarian milieu kept its link with the Faubourg St Germain. Before 1914 a certain degree of Francophile snobbery was still obligatory in 'good families'. My parents did not belong to the milieux where French was spoken to distinguish them from the vulgar crowd, but they spoke the 'official language' well enough to receive the business connections of my father at home – Ottoman pashas wearing the red fez, and Balkan consuls who did not know a word of German, even if they served Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the ally of Germany.

When I was a boy, avant-garde literature took its inspiration from Baudelaire, Verlaine, the French symbolists, from Flaubert and Stendhal. Politically speaking, this literature inclined to the left; Anatole France was the favourite author of our modernist schoolmasters, while the traditionalists on the staff persevered in their cult of nineteenth century Hungarian romanticism which took its inspiration from Lamartine and Victor Hugo. The official Socialist Party was characteristically German orientation, nonetheless the intellectual left read Georges Sorel and sometimes Jaurès or Durkheim; in any case, they preferred French authors to the German theorists of Socialism.

Thus, from the extreme right to the extreme left there was a Francophile party in Hungary, but it was an intellectual rather than a definitely political one. Among the politicians there was, however, Mihály Károlyi, who from 1912 onwards tried to reorientate completely our foreign policy by frequent exchanges with French political leaders in Paris. I have told earlier how I achieved a certain reputation between 1936 and 1939 in Paris, Berlin and London as press correspondent and political commentator, literary critic and historian, also as a representative of the political tendency in Hungary which European opinion associated with the name of Mihály Károlyi. In his efforts to reconcile the Slav peoples to Hungary, he sought the support of France rather than of Germany, which could involve us in a war of Germany against the Slavs. In 1917, Károlyi, in opposition, pressed for a separate peace on the basis of the restoration of Poland and the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France, and we now know that in this endeavour he had the support of the unfortunate last King of Hungary, Charles IV. With a life-work as a historian now behind me, I can say with the total conviction that the study of the centuries has given me, that the Habsburg Empire did as much good as other empires and – in spite of the execution of rebels such as Egmont at Brussels, prisoners like Silvio Pellico[207] at Spielberg in Bohemia and the gibbet of Arad (celebrated by Victor Hugo)[208] – did no more harm to its subjects than did Britain in India, France in Syria or Algeria, or Holland in Indonesia. The Austro–Hungarian Empire was faced in 1918 with the same crisis that these other empires had to face later, especially after 1945.

In agreement with Károlyi and his political grouping, I fought in Paris against the fascist influence in Hungarian politics and the orientation towards Germany. When Munich came in 1938 and then the World War came in 1939, I remained in correspondence with my friends in Hungary, even in the first phase of the war; the 'non-belligerence' of Mussolini meant that contacts could still be maintained via Italy. Hungary remained neutral as we had expected, and the Polish–Hungarian friendship stood firm. When Poland fell, a warm welcome was extended in Hungary to the Polish refugees, in spite of Nazi pressure. When France fell in 1940 and Britain was left alone to face the Nazi hordes, the die was cast. My course of action was inevitable: I volunteered for General de Gaulle's Free French Forces based in London and continued my fight against Nazism on the Allied side, as I shall now proceed to tell in detail. I was volunteer number 231. Unfortunately, I lost my badge – *les ailes de la victoire* with my number on it (231 on the badge, number 224 on my Acte d'Engagement; I cannot now remember the reason for the discrepancy in the figures) – in 1948, when we were in Paris, sitting at a café terrace, after watching the 18th June procession down the Champs Elysées on the anniversary of de Gaulle's appeal in 1940 to all Frenchmen who were free to join him.

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[207] Silvio Pellico (1789–1854) Italian poet, playwright, sentenced to death for his radical views in 1822 but released in 1830, rose to fame especially for his prison biography that contributed a lot to the cause of Italy against Habsburg rule.

[208] After the defeat of the Hungarian rebellious army in 1849, the commander-in-chief of the Austrian army, Julius Jacob von Haynau, with more or less tacit approval from Vienna, had thirteen generals of the Hungarian army court-martialled and executed in the fortress of Arad, causing an uproar in Europe (some further executions followed). Menczer's reference to Hugo is, however, unclear here.

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Chapter 18

The War and the Crisis of 1940

Upon the outbreak of war in 1939, I was summoned to work at the Ministry of Information. The political department of the Labour Party, which mainly dealt with foreign affairs, issued on my behalf an official statement that I was a political refugee and the Home Office (i.e. the Ministry of the Interior) authorised me to stay in England for the duration of the war. The Polish government-in-exile gave its support to a new London fortnightly review *Free Europe,* edited by Casimir Smogorzevski, which was considered to be the semi-official organ of the Allied cause. I became a regular contributor to this review from its beginning in October 1939. I also wrote several studies on Hungary for the Foreign Office Research Department (Chatham House). I made my position as a pro-Western Allies Hungarian crystal clear in November 1939 in *Free Europe,* in my article *Hungary and the Second World War.*[209] I proclaimed the complete solidarity of Hungary with Poland, and I gave some precisions as to how to establish a new and more just and balanced political order in Central Europe when the war was over. I emphasised the fact that a complete settlement of the various national aspirations was not possible in this region, but that a stable order could be established if certain territorial concessions were made to Hungary, whose position at that time was a moral factor of some importance. This was the article which Pál Teleki quoted in the Hungarian Parliament as an English voice, knowing well that it was mine. Teleki was much more pro-Western Allies and especially more pro-British than we had guessed before the war in 1938. He sent me, through an intermediary, a personal message to let me know how much he appreciated my action in *Free Europe.* As to the press in Hungary, even the most official and pro-government section of it reported lengthy extracts from my *Free Europe* articles, but without commenting on them, in view of the proximity of Nazi Germany.

The idea of a Hungarian Legion abroad, about which I spoke earlier, came to nothing in the end, owing to certain unforeseen circumstances. First, we could not embarrass the action of Teleki in a pro-Allied sense; secondly, it was just as difficult to attempt to bring together fierce old political enemies such as Tibor Eckhardt, a former minister of the Horthy Government, Mihály Károlyi, an independent socialist of the left, the moderate socialists László Fényes and Vilmos Böhm and finally Archduke Otto, his brothers and followers. They all hated Nazi Germany, but their ideas concerning the future were too diverse and they were divided by bitter memories of a too recent past. Károlyi was the only one of the politicians who was in England at the time, and I saw him frequently, but after the tragic death early in the war of his only son Adam, a trainee pilot in the RAF which shattered him, he retired for some time from all political activities. His daughter Judith, who was a student in France, was attached to one of the Franco–British liaison missions and later joined the Free French Ambulance service.

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[209] The title was *Hungary and the Second Great War* (1939).

Many other young Hungarians rallied to the Allied cause, but no Hungarian Legion of volunteers was ever practicable. When Hungarians from the home country passed through London in 1939 on their way to the war in Finland, I acted as their guide and interpreter, and some three hundred of these Hungarians volunteered to serve in the Free French Forces on their return from Finland in 1940.[210]

The events of May and June 1940 were a cause of great sorrow but not of dismay to me and all friends of France and the Allied cause. *Free Europe* can boast that it was at that time the voice of unshakeable confidence in ultimate victory. From the first moment of General de Gaulle's famous appeal at the BBC of the 18th June to all Frenchmen to rally to him ("La France a perdu une bataille, elle n'a pas perdu la guerre. Dans l'univers libre, des forces immenses n'ont pas encore donné.")[211] I contacted his Headquarters at St Stephen's House on the Embankment, near Westminster Bridge (his temporary HQ until 4 Carlton Gardens, next to the former German Embassy of Ribbentrop and requisitioned by the British Government for the use of the Free French Forces, was evacuated by the commercial company which occupied the premises). It was in my capacity as a London journalist that I made my first visit to St Stephen's House. I had decided to mention the possibility of a Danubian Legion of volunteers, if the occasion to do so arose. Professor Denis Saurat [1890–1958] of the Institut Français in London – a very loyal friend of the political circle to which I belonged, a contributor to *Free Europe* from its beginning and who had given immediate support to General de Gaulle at the BBC – gave me an introduction to an officer of the French Mission based at the Institut Français on one of the most tragic days of that time. This Captain Rive, or Rivet, I cannot remember his name exactly, was in charge of the affairs of the Foreign Legion, and it was to him that I spoke of the possible formation of a new Foreign Legion as a first step towards a European army of the future, composed of anti-fascist Italians, Spanish refugees, Hungarian émigrés, Austrian anti-Nazis, Greeks, Serbs, Croats, Romanians, who disapproved the accommodating policy of their governments towards Hitler. Furthermore, there were thousands of second-generation Russians in France itself, who could not serve in the French Army because their parents had not taken out French nationality, or else had been given a theoretical nationality by the Peace Treaties of 1919 and were now Romanians or Czechs, Lithuanians or Esthonians. There were absurd and sometimes tragic technical and police complications. One of my friends, Aurel Kolnai, who hoped for an Allied victory as much as I did, was interned in France at the beginning of the war because, though born in Hungary of Hungarian parents, he had become an Austrian citizen in the 1920s because he lived and worked in Vienna, so that the Nazi invasion of 1938 made him an unwilling subject of Hitler. Another friend of mine, a well-known artist, Conte Ricardo Priuli, was born in Florence of an Italian father and a Swedish mother and had various family relations in the English aristocracy. He was working at the BBC and at the Ministry of Information at the very moment when he was arrested and interned as an enemy alien, although he was anti-Fascist, because he had done his military service in the Italian army. Rudolf Olden, a Berlin barrister and one of the editors of the *Berliner Tagblatt* and a well-known anti-Nazi, had lectured at Oxford since 1933 and wrote in the quality press during the first phase of the war. He was suddenly arrested in May 1940 and sent to Canada, his ship being torpedoed by his compatriots, whose victory he certainly did not desire.

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[210] There was a great sympathy for the Finns in Hungary, thousands wished to volunteer for their cause, four-hundreds were chosen. They saw no action, arriving late (two weeks before the end), and indeed, via London. Menczer's piece of information is invaluable, though it is questionable that so many of them decided to serve in the FFF, rather than return home. The official records tell that the volunteer battalion was dissolved upon return.

[211] Menczer quotes de Gaulle's appeal liberally. The translation is "France lost a battle! But France did not lose the war! […] In the free universe, immense forces have not yet given in".

Thus, in June 1940, I was sure that a European Legion under the Free French flag of General de Gaulle (the *Croix de Lorraine*) was a good idea. For all the nations subdued by Hitler, France was their second country. General de Gaulle seemed to be a man who could cope with unexpected situations with courage, with a lucid intelligence and with a total lack of that meanness of spirit characteristic of officialdom. My task therefore was to get in touch with his GHQ and if possible, with the General himself. Professor Saurat advised me to get in touch with a Doctor Métadier, and it was he who was the first man to speak to me about Dakar in Senegal, French West Africa, and the French colonies which, it was hoped, would rally to the cause. I had several interviews with his chief assistant Lt Desjardins, whom I was to see often in Africa and then towards the end of the war at Carlton Gardens, but I was never to know his real name. His brother later organised the Free French Radio at Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo. I summed up my personal position with regard to General de Gaulle's action in an article in *Free Europe,* which the BBC reproduced in part or in full in French and German. Here I compared General de Gaulle with the Prussian military hero General Yorck von Wartenburg, who had rallied an army in disarray against Napoleon with his Manifesto from Koenigsberg and was disavowed by his king for his pains and condemned in contumacy by a military court.[212] Hitler was not Napoleon, I said, and there was another difference: Yorck von Wartenburg had waited for the defeat of the Grande Armée in Russia before striking his blow, while de Gaulle had said 'no' to defeat and submission at the very first moment. What glory would await de Gaulle?

I do not remember whether this article had already been published when I made my next visit to St Stephen's House, where I was agreeably surprised to meet my old friend Maurice Schumann of the Wickham Steed days at Holland House, described in a previous chapter. I had not seen him for a few years, but round about 1935 we had been close friends, for as correspondent of the Agency Havas in London, he took a lively interest in Central European affairs. Strongly anti-fascist, he was also experiencing the intellectual and moral crisis of our generation and had had a similar evolution to my own. He told me that in 1938 he had gone to Hungary on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress and felt a sincere friendship for Hungary and was an admirer of Cardinal Serédi,[213] who had received him very kindly. Furthermore, he was becoming an increasingly serious practising Catholic. The next day, or the following one, I had lunch with Maurice Schumann at the National Liberal Club. He apologised for his dirty uniform, having no civilian suit, which he could not buy in England, since everything in England, including clothes, was rationed, so that he had to keep going to his club for his meals because he was known there. This was the usual and sometimes necessary excuse French officers working at St Stephen's House had to make.

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[212] Ludwig Yorck von Wartenburg (1759–1830) had indeed a crucial role in reforming the Prussian army and made important political decisions on his own during the last phase of the Napoleonic wars, but he was not condemned by the military court.

I exposed to Maurice Schumann all my ideas concerning a European Legion placed under the command of General de Gaulle; very pleased that I was able at last to approach somebody who was close to the General (he acted as interpreter, his function in the army in any case, and was also the official voice of la France Libre at the BBC) and who shared many of my ideas. I added a fresh argument: we were witnessing the beginning of a war of the people in every country who are thirsting for an end to demagogy and a return to the reign of law and of liberty, who want a stable European order, while at the same time expecting serious and fundamental reforms, I said. The rallying cry of General de Gaulle was the first sign of a post-fascist Europe. Governments were powerless. Events in our Danubian region had proved that there was no such thing as a Czechoslovak nation, that the Yugoslavia made in 1919 was a fiction, that the Great Romania of Iorga[214] and Take Ionesco[215] was a piece of romantic mythology, the inhabitants of the Lower Danube region were not colonists put there by the Emperor Trajan (according to a version of history à la Michelet) but immigrants from Italy to a country which had been devastated by the Mongols and then by the plague in the thirteenth century, and repopulated by Italians and Germans who had been encouraged to go there by the kings of Hungary and the emperors of Constantinople. For twenty years after the First World War, I said, Hungary had been encircled, certainly not by an iron ring, since it had been broken by the first attack on it. It was absurd to think that nations would accept a role imposed upon them by the Peace Treaty. There were two real nations in Eastern Europe with a long political tradition, friends over the centuries, Hungary and Poland. They had been artificially deprived of a common frontier, so that Poland was weakened at the same time that she was being re-created. It was time to begin again and to construct!

Furthermore, I said, outside Europe we had an excellent ally, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, with whom I had had many contacts in London during the years of his exile. In his entourage, there were many graduates of French universities, and the emperor himself had long been a Francophile. Alone amongst the 'coloured' peoples, he was the only man, being a Christian and a monarch, who understood Europe. The incredible stupidity of Mussolini, not to say his criminal immorality, had made war on this monarch and his people, instead of using him to make a synthesis between the old and the new ideas of the century. Instead of letting Mussolini drag down Hitler in his own ruin at the time of the Ethiopian War, the extreme weakness of the Western powers had been responsible for the abject appeasement of Arab, Hindu, African and Asian agitators. Instead of the Geneva Sanctions and the helpless League of Nations, in which I never believed, the solidarity between the peoples of the Middle East and the Western powers – the former owing their political existence to the French and British principles of 1914–1918 – should have been proclaimed.

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[213] Cardinal Jusztinián Serédi (1884–1945), Slovak-born Primate of Hungary, Archbishop of Esztergom, member of the Benedictine Order, canon lawyer.

[214] Nicolae Iorga (1870–1940), one of the most influential nationalist Romanian historians, President of the National Assembly and Prime Minister 1931–1932; as he rejected the Iron Garde's fascist ideology, the gardists murdered him.

[215] Take (Tache) Ionescu (1858–1922) was a leading figure of the Romanian state, its Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and also a novelist.

General de Gaulle, I concluded, had his hands free. He could offer, in a new spirit, a new order to the former protectorates of France. He could approach the friends of France in the Balkans, in Eastern Europe and even in Austria. He was not an enemy of Hungary, he was not obliged to believe in the 1918 myth of Hussite Czechoslovakia, or Romania descended from Trajan. He brought a new theory to military warfare, the idea of a prolonged resistance to enemy occupation.

I summed up all my ideas and my information in a concrete proposal: to create a Gaullist centre in Cairo, from where contact with Athens, Belgrade, Budapest, etc. would be easier than from London, which was practically cut off from the outside world by July 1940. This centre would consist of three sections: first the French territories in Africa, secondly Ethiopia, Lebanon and the Arab world, and thirdly the East European countries. The new policy and the new military principle of resistance under occupation must be worked out in detail. I myself would leave to perform any mission whatsoever as soon as the General gave his consent.

Maurice Schumann asked me to give him a written summary of all these ideas and this I did the next day. Almost every day in July I saw somebody from *La France Libre,* Métadier, Lt Desjardins, Schumann or Lt Saint-André who was the press officer and a member of General de Gaulle's personal staff. In the little boarding house where I lived in those years near St Pancras station, the local Town Hall placed a group of Belgian refugees who wanted to serve in the Free French army, whatever their political differences amongst themselves were – one more argument to broaden the Free French Forces, as they were called after the rallying call of 18th June, into a European Legion. My boarding house became virtually a Belgian centre in London, a Belgian officer of the reserve, who came to see his soldiers there, asking me to introduce him at St Stephen's House. Every day the proprietor, himself a Frenchman, took telephone calls for me to go to St Stephen's House, and inevitably realised what I was doing, although I had never spoken to him of my link with the Free French GHQ. Also Desjardins himself paid several calls on me there. Although not an expert on Belgian affairs, knowing the country only as a tourist, I finally agreed to become an unofficial liaison agent between the Belgians and the Free French.

Naturally, there were many obstacles in the way before a European Legion could have been formed. Apart from General de Gaulle, there was no military or political leader present in London at that time and he was only recognised as the leader of French volunteers for the Allied cause. I think, however, that even if the idea was somewhat premature, it was a good one and the first key towards it ought to have been taken in June

1940. One year later, after the German offensive against Russia, Hitler started to talk about a European army. It would have been better if the Western Allies had spoken first, since it seemed obvious to me that this war was different from all preceding wars, including that of 1914–1918. In the immense crisis of 1940, I saw a new beginning. The first sign of a European future came, in my opinion, in the appeal of General de Gaulle on 18th June.

Before I finish with St Stephen's House, I must tell two stories which I remember from those days. One day I was waiting there to see Maurice Schumann. I had just written an appeal which was to be broadcast from the BBC the next day, addressed to all the friends of France, writers with a French culture, former students at French universities, artists who had had their early training in Montparnasse and Montmartre. I do not remember my exact words anymore, but the gist was that France continues to live. Old Francophiles should keep their faith in France, I said, combat Nazi propaganda that France was finished, and if it was at all possible, they should join the Free French of de Gaulle 'to make the France of tomorrow'. While I was sitting correcting the first version of my text, de Saint-André approached to greet a lady sitting next to me, whom I did not know but who was obviously awaiting her turn to see Maurice Schumann also. It was physically impossible for me not to hear what de Saint-André said to her: "All is going well, Madame, the Archduke has already seen the General. They had a very interesting talk. The General thanks you for it." The title Archduke, the unique privilege of the former reigning House of my own country, caught my attention. I learned much later, towards the end of the war, that the 'Archduke' referred to was Robert of Habsburg-Lorraine [1915–1996], Duke of Este and Royal Prince of Hungary, younger son of the last Emperor-King Charles and Zita of Bourbon-Parma. Born in 1915, he studied political economy at Louvain University. When the war broke out, he was traveling in the Far East and probably his visit to the General was connected with affairs in Indochina, still at that time a French protectorate. I did not make the personal acquaintance of Archduke Robert until 1945. Then I learned that he had worked very closely with the French military leaders in the colonies, also with a Resistance group in France led by his uncle Prince Xavier of Bourbon-Parma [1889–1977] and had served in a French regiment in Canada, in the Middle East and in Italy. Later on, in 1952, I saw him again in Paris where he had made his home and where he became a director of the Bank of Indochina and in 1953 married Princess Margarita of Savoy-Aosta.

I still do not know today what his interview in July 1940 with General de Gaulle was about, but it is however certain that I had guessed correctly what the political attitude of the Habsburg-Lorraine brothers was. The old-style legitimism died with Emperor Charles in 1922. Without abandoning the monarchical principle, the later monarchists gave a new dimension to old fidelities and the tradition of the House of Austria. They were conservatives rather than doctrinal monarchists. Their aim was the formation of a Danubian Union strong enough to form a central power between Germany and Russia. There was no question of the restoration of the Monarchy, nor for the time being of frontiers. On the outbreak of the war, Archduke Otto, based in Paris, directed all his efforts, articles and speeches to an attempt to unite all the good European patriots in some sort of movement aimed at establishing a Danubian Union. In Paris, the influence of the two eldest Habsburg brothers was considerable; in Washington, the close friendship between Archduke Otto and President Roosevelt was known at all the embassies, in spite of the discretion with which the former acted. Archduke Robert spoke French (including Parisian argot) without any accent and several foreign languages. At the time when I knew him, he was a tall young man of athletic build, lively intelligence, highly cultured and knowledgeable in political and military questions of the day and by temperament was resourceful and brave. On that July day in 1940, when I did not yet know him, my historian's imagination was delighted by the fact that one of the earliest supporters of General de Gaulle's Free France came from that House of Austria which throughout so many pages of history had been the rival of the kings of France.

My second story which stands out in my memory of my numerous visits to the GHQ concerns my short personal interview with General de Gaulle himself, sitting facing him at his desk. I had often caught sight of him. He gave many interviews to journalists, answering them affably, but always evasively, questioning representatives of the press himself rather than answering their questions. It was his way of getting information on English affairs, which he had previously known only from his reading, and also no doubt from the expert advice of Maurice Schumann, his chief liaison officer in England. In my case, the General asked me questions about Hungary and Poland and Italian interests in Central Europe. I replied as well as I could in the time available. Those few minutes were enough to convince me that here the style reflected the man; he was a man of thought as well as of action, independent, grave, but open to new ideas and capable of learning by experience. His concentration and his method of working were striking. No telephone call was allowed to disturb his conversation with the person to whom he was giving an interview, no letter was brought in to sign, no letters were left on his table.

In my rare moments of leisure at that time I attempted to read his books published before 1940. His style reminded me somewhat of our Görgey, the greatest military leader without any doubt that Hungary has ever produced. There was the same sober analysis and lucid synthesis, the same sense of military greatness, the same gravity in the face of responsibility, the same biting irony in denouncing cowardice and incompetence, or a political action unworthy of his army, the same monumental sense of the poetry of military action, which was all the more impressive because of its moderation and reserve. I soon banished from my mind any idea that the destiny of de Gaulle might be as tragic as that of Görgey.

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Chapter 19

Joining the Forces Françaises Libres

On the 17th or 18th of August, at 4.30 in the afternoon, I was called to the telephone: "Maurice Schumann speaking. The General commands me to say that he counts on you to speed up our recruitment. He has just decided that foreigners who share your attitude and ideas can be accepted in the Free French Forces. For the moment there can be no question of a European Legion. Later on we will see." "Very well", I replied, "in that case I will volunteer immediately." "Nothing of the kind! The moment will come when you can be of much greater use to us than by joining up as a soldier. In the meantime, don't do anything silly. We want to regroup the members of the Foreign Legion who fought in Norway and have joined us. Anyhow, the Churchill – de Gaulle Agreement does not authorise us to go any further yet. When we are established on French soil – overseas or in Europe – we will have more scope. Then we can think out a policy of 'European' resistance and finally a European Union with France at its head, given that we are the most important of the non-defeated countries. On this point, the General agrees with your ideas." – "What do you want me to do in the meantime?" I asked. "Make a second appeal on the BBC to the foreign friends of France?" – "No, we want to improve our recruitment, but to speak in such terms publicly might give the impression that we intend to organise something." – "But isn't that what you are doing?" – "I have already said too much. We count on your absolute discretion! Go and see Lt Doucet at our military depot at the Olympia Exhibition Hall. This officer is in charge of our recruiting drive. He might need you to examine documents and the personal antecedents of people asking to join us. Some of them will probably be in foreign languages which you know better than Lt. Doucet and in any case your advice will be useful." "Without knowing me", I replied, "I don't think Lt Doucet would accept my help and I have no official status which would entitle me to interfere in military matters. When I am a volunteer for the Free French Forces and when I wear uniform, the General Staff can appoint me to Lt Doucet's mission. In any case, I will go and see him tomorrow morning." – "Wait one more day", said Maurice Schumann, "he is only coming to Carlton Gardens tomorrow. And do not volunteer for our army, I beg you, you will find better opportunities to serve us and your country. As you can see from the newspapers, Greater Romania is no longer our Latin sister but a blonde Aryan of the North. You could perhaps explain the Hungarian point of view." – "I have already done so. Read the last number of *Free Europe.* I have given the Hungarian point of view, although in a somewhat personal manner. I envisage the independence of Transylvania within the framework of a Danubian Union. It must not fall into the hands of Hitler. It is from that region that the liberation of Poland will one day come, with the assistance of Hungary. I would be very grateful if you would talk to General de Gaulle about this, for I am dreaming of a landing in the Balkans which would end this war and it is possible that a French military leader could succeed [Maréchal Louis] Franchet d'Espèrey [1856–1942] in this." – "We have not got so far yet! In any case, pick me up at Carlton Gardens tomorrow, and over lunch we will talk about these splendid dreams for the future!"

The next day, late in the afternoon, I went to see Lt Doucet at Olympia. He had heard about me, but he asked me to give him time to telephone Maurice Schumann, so that he was better informed about what the GHQ wanted him to do with me. I replied that that did not seem to be necessary, I wanted to join the Free French Forces, despite the advice of Maurice Schumann to the contrary. Then if the General and the GHQ wanted me to be attached to the depot at Olympia, they could say so. As all the offices were already closed, Lt Doucet asked me to come back the next day.

I arrived early, although I lived quite a long way away from Olympia (a big exhibition hall built around 1860 in the style of the old Paris Trocadéro, the Free French Forces only occupied it from 1940 to 41). I passed my medical examination and was asked if I would prefer to serve under an assumed name. Quite unprepared for this question, no *nom de guerre* sprang to my mind. A young French woman wearing the uniform of the British Women's Army, with a French tricolore emblem, asked for the translation of my Christian name so that she could register me. In the old days of the Imperial and Royal Army of Francis Joseph all the Hungarian Bélas called themselves Adalbert. In the Free French Forces, I feared the jokes of Gavroche if I had such a name, so I signed all the papers in the name of 'Albert'.

I will not describe my 'first day at the barracks'. We were a somewhat extraordinary army. I answered questions, I filled in forms. Seeing my reply to the question concerning foreign languages (German, French, Italian, Hungarian, a bit of Spanish) the warrant officer remarked that I should probably be assigned to intelligence. I signed a provisional engagement; each volunteer had to go before a commission of officers, upon whom depended the final acceptance into the army.

Later on, we were reproached with having signed an engagement to General de Gaulle's person. General Giraud[216] in 1942, it seems, complained that we had all sworn fidelity to a future Head of France, a possible dictator. But in the circumstances of that time, none of us interpreted our formula of engagement in that way. We were not soldiers of the French Republic, which had ceased to exist in international law. The French State proclaimed at Vichy was never recognised by Great Britain. From the British point of view, our only judicial basis was the Churchill – de Gaulle Agreement which had the legal status of a state treaty. The British authorities could only tolerate armed men in its own forces, or in those of an ally. No constitutional procedure was ever devised to replace General de Gaulle as Chef des Français Libres in case of necessity, so it was inevitable that the name of General Charles de Gaulle was spelt out in the formula of our engagement.

From the 20th to the 26th August, I lived at Olympia. I went out in the street wearing British battledress, with a dark blue beret and a tricolore emblem to show that I was a volunteer for the Free French Forces. We were not at first allowed to wear the word

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[216] Henri Giraud (1879–1949), an ally of de Gaulle against Vichy France, commander in the FFF, but he was the losing side in the political rivalry between him and de Gaulle.

FRANCE on our shoulders, a precautionary measure taken by the Home Office in case of invasion by the Germans, which seemed possible in those months of 1940. It happened sometimes that the police arrested allied soldiers in the streets (Poles, Dutch, Norwegians) because they spoke foreign languages and wore strange uniforms. To wear the insignia FRANCE on our shoulders would have prevented such misunderstandings. General de Gaulle himself refused point blank to wear the letters FRANCE, saying that every policeman and every Home Guard (an improvised civilian army of volunteers intended to repel any invasion, pick up spies, etc.) ought to be able to recognise the uniform and the insignia of a French General. Thus, throughout the war, we had to wear British battledress, or the American-style military jacket with the French insignia and emblems. Nobody will ever know how General de Gaulle managed always to wear the uniform of a brigadier general, correct down to the last detail including decorations, during all those years. Maurice Schumann told me one day that they had had to find an expert tailor in London to make the General's uniforms (he was enormously tall), which was quite a problem at Carlton Gardens.

Everywhere I went, my tricolore badge and FRANCE on my shoulder brought me constant marks of sympathy. The waiter at the Café Royal (the rendezvous of writers and artists at that period, where Wilde's table was still pointed out with great respect) had known me for years. Suddenly he began to call me monsieur and say *merci* when I paid my modest bills. In the bus and the underground, strangers came up to tell me how much they hoped for an early liberation of France. When I bought cigarettes and papers at Victoria station, the man at the counter assured me that "a train to Paris" would soon be running again.

My comrades at Olympia, where I worked on the telephone since I spoke both languages, included a Lt Eugène Manuel (who ended the war as a Lt Colonel attached to the staff of Jacques Soustelle [1912–1990], the Director of the DGER (Direction Générale des Études et des Recherches) where I myself was to serve from 1943–1946, as I shall tell later) and who sent for me on the day following my provisional engagement. He knew about my friendship with Maurice Schumann. He told me that on the French Service at the BBC I had been the subject of a commentary in which, out mentioning my name, Maurice Schumann had told "how a very well-known foreign press correspondent had just given proof of his very old and very sincere love of France by becoming one of our combatants". Lt Manuel also told me: "You will meet many foreigners here, probably not on your own level or that of your friends. Our recruiting propaganda is limited while our base remains on British soil. We have thought very seriously about your idea of extending the Free French movement into Europe. But for the moment we have to leave all political contacts abroad entirely in the hands of our British Allies." I replied that I had never intended any action against the British, but the pressing aim of the present was a prolonged resistance to enemy occupation, and for that reason it was necessary to create a European organisation, i.e. to extend the Free French Forces into an Army of European Resistance, since France was the first country to take a step in this direction, thanks to General de Gaulle. I told him that I thought it necessary to make a close study of the new problems posed by this new strategic need and make all possible contacts. For example, Germany had lost the 1914–1918 war because she thought it was a repetition of the 1870 war; France has just lost a battle because she wanted at all costs to win another battle of the Marne or Verdun. Looking around, at Olympia, I could see the elements of a new army which could be trained for such future work. It was true that we had far too many officers for our small number. Almost without exception the younger officers who happened to be in England had rallied to de Gaulle. Few of the higher-ranking officers who had fought in the Norwegian campaign, or had taken part in the Dunkirk evacuation, had done so, and they were divided against themselves. The officers of the Reserve, the non-commissioned officers (the NCOs) except for the career ones, went back to France, although there were also many men who stayed behind in England.

One group of reservists decided to stay in England and formed a very useful intellectual bloc: those men who were professionally used to an international life, spoke English and had long-standing contacts in England and America. Amongst there were those Frenchmen who were disillusioned with the Front Populaire, personal enemies of fascism and Nazism, moderately to the left, while our young professional St Cyriens were strongly to the right. In so far as General de Gaulle's movement had any political colouring at all in this first phase, it was determined by Commandant Thierry d'Argenlieu [1889–1964]. The radical and socialist tradition did not appear until 1941, with the arrival of André Philip [1902–1970], a socialist professor at Lyon University, in Britain. The communists were still bound by the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. It was curious to see how alike the two Frances were – de Gaulle France and Vichy France – in their social and ideological aspects. On both sides there was a military leader, de Gaulle for us, Marshal Pétain for Vichy; officers of the conservative and Catholic tradition, Thierry d'Argenlieu for us, Colonel La Rocque for Vichy. On both sides there was to be found the classic intellectual radicalism – the 'Masonic' influence – for us, Professor René Cassin [1887–1976] and for Vichy, Camille Chautemps [1885–1963], former prime minister under the Front Populaire. On both sides there was a contingent of French international intellectuals, for us, Maurice Schumann, René Aron, Paul Vaucher [1887–1966], Denis Saurat, Edmond Vermeil [1878–1964]; for Vichy, Luchaire, Brinon, Brassillach [see below]. There were socialists and former communists on both sides, for us, André Philip, Guy Mollet [1905–1975], while Jean-Pierre Bloch [1905–1999], Félix Gouin [1884–1977] and Louis Lévy joined us later. We had an ex-communist combatant in André Malraux, Vichy had Doriot.

Thus, it is quite untrue to say that we continued the Popular Front, or the radical, socialist or freemason tradition; on the contrary, there was no ideological movement at all in the Free French Forces, nor was there anything among us that could be defined as Gaullisme. We had no idea that an ideological Vichyisme, or Vichy system was being evolved in France. Officers and others of a certain age who passed through England in June 1940 simply went back to France to re-join their families and resume their responsibilities in civilian life. It was the younger elements and those who had no personal links abroad who stayed behind. The French who were already living in England – a colony of about 6,000 families – were practically unanimous in supporting the action of General de Gaulle. These London Frenchmen were businessmen or had top jobs in industry and were conservative by temperament and economic interest. The vast majority of Frenchmen to whom I spoke in June and July 1940 respected the person of Marshal Pétain and regretted his attitude. There was practically unanimous contempt for Laval; Brinon, Luchaire and Brassillach[217] were unknown outside intellectual circles. Maurras was no longer taken seriously and was certainly not popular with his former admirers in view of his more recent pro-German evolution.

A great many Belgians joined the Free French Forces. They left us later, asking to be transferred to the army in the Belgian Congo. French soldiers who asked to return to the unoccupied zone (roughly the southern half of France) were given the facilities to do so by the Churchill Government. The Belgians, however, had no unoccupied zone, they would have been made prisoners of war if they had gone back. This explains why the Belgians were more unanimous than the French in their desire to stay in England and fight on under the command of General de Gaulle, rather than in units of the British Army, where they would have had language difficulties.

The commission of officers who interviewed us before we were finally admitted to the Free French Forces was presided over by Commandant Ychigoyen. I knew that many of our comrades used a *nom de guerre* to protect their families in France, but I could not understand why this commander of a battalion of *chasseurs alpins,* who had served in the Norwegian campaign, should have preferred a Japanese samurai name to his own French one. I was told that he was a Basque from the region of Bayonne, where this historical name is well-known and represented a very old and fine military tradition. I soon became friends with Commandant Ychigoyen, a man of wide culture, a military historian and author of various learned works; moreover, having travelled a great deal, he knew Hungary. At the end of my interrogation by the commission, he made a point of telling me personally that the decision to admit me to the Free French Forces was unanimous. Shaking me warmly by the hand, he added: “We Basques have an obscure origin. According to certain experts, we have distant links with the Huns of Attila and the Magyars of Árpád. In any case, we are very Catholic, and we have an affection for the country of St Stephen which I hope to see at the end of the war with some of her territory restored, and united to France by ancestral sympathies.”

My interrogation lasted almost an hour. The commission wanted to know everything. It was inevitable that we talked about politics. I was asked if I wanted French nationality after the war. I replied that I could not decide such a question in advance, although I was ready to swear loyalty to France. First of all, I said, we do not know if we shall survive the war. Then Hungary will very likely need all those men who have a great deal of experience behind them, and I shall be one of those men. The only thing I can foresee clearly is that Hitler and Mussolini, the shame of Italy, will be swept away. After the Nazi defeat, Hungary must make her contribution to the new order in Europe. She will need men who have shown firmness and integrity, who were never associated with the indignity and the stupidity of those last years. I was asked if I would consent to serve in the Foreign Legion. I replied that the name of the unit did not interest me as long as it was a fighting one. Then trying to guess what the next moves in the war might be, they asked me what I should do if Hungary entered the war on the enemy side. "I am absolutely certain that my country hopes for the liberation of Poland and France. It would be impossible to ask her to defend Czechoslovakia, a state created at her expense. I believe the victory of Hitler to be absolutely impossible. Nazism has never been the opposite of Marxism. From its earliest beginnings it signified a return to violence and revolutionary barbarity, as compared with a civilised and European revolution which could gradually have led Germany back to her pre-Bismarckian traditions. Nazism is a primitive revolution without principles, without a future, without humanity, without any notions of law and progress. Even if Nazism promised to right the wrong my country suffered in 1919, it would be a dreadful treason to accept such a phenomenon."

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[217] Pierre Laval (1883–1945), socialist, then conservative politician, a prominent Vichyist, sentenced to death and executed after the war, but the trial was controversial. Fernan de Brinon (1885–1947), also a Vichyist politician and Jean Luchaire (1901–1946), the main propagandist of the Vichy regime, were also tried and executed. Robert Brasillach (1909–1945), writer, journalist, one of the first film critics, was also executed after the war for supporting the Nazi cause; but putting someone to trial for intellectual crimes was a highly controversial issue especially in France.

I do not want to boast because I saw all those things so clearly in those days. I record them as typical of the Free French attitude, because later on we were accused of being international mercenaries recruited by secret police, and that our Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Etudes, later called Direction Générale d'Etudes et de Renseignements – the BCRA and the DGER about which I shall speak later, were a centre of espionage. The fact is that the commission of officers presided over by Major Ychigoyen was the embryo of the BCRA which later became the DGER when the Provisional Government was formed at Algiers in 1942. Sometime after my interrogation, the commission sent regular bulletins concerning the speciality, usefulness and the character of volunteers to headquarters, without giving any names. This provided an excellent means of summing up news and developments on the home front in France and the colonies. Still later on, the BCRA and the DGER issued weekly news bulletins based on the reading of the German and Allied press, reports on political and military developments in the Far East and other problems concerning France. With only about half a dozen exceptions, all the officials of this organisation were career officers or former civil servants of the French Republic, the exceptions having to pass a very difficult and obligatory examination, or Concours. Jacques Soustelle, the civilian head of this examining body and chief assistant of Colonel Passy-Devawrin [1911–1998] ('Passy' because the Paris Métro comes overground at Passy, thus Colonel Devawrin was the visible head of the underground resistance) was a university lecturer, and before taking on this job had, as Commissioner of Information, coordinated information of interest to the resistance groups in France, to the colonial governments, the High Command and to the Commissariat of War (so called because the word ministry could not be used by a government which was not internationally recognised until de Gaulle entered Paris in August 1944). None of these organisations ever had the slightest police powers. All these accusations were made in the Vichy review *Ecrits de Paris;* all were false.

We had chasseurs alpins (rifle corps), fuseliers, marins (marines) and soldiers who had been evacuated from Dunkirk from various units at Olympia and then at the camp called Delville (a codename). I was transferred there on 26th or 27th August when I was finally accepted into the Free French Forces. As I left, Major Ychigoyen came up to wish me good luck and I am sorry that I never saw this officer again. As far as I know, he was later on a member of de Gaulle's military advisory body in the capacity of chief archivist and official military historian of our operations before he re-joined a fighting unit for the Normandy landing. A lieutenant in the Spahis (Algerian soldiers) who had been one of the commission of officers also came up to me to express his good wishes in a manner which touched me deeply. He said: "You no doubt noticed that I asked you more questions than the other members of the commission and that they were somewhat disagreeable. You must not bear me any malice. You told us you were a socialist in your youth and very militant, and I did not like that. I am a career officer. Among your references, you gave names of Frenchmen whom I do not like. I don't like the 'reds', so I wanted to know whether you volunteered for us because you loved France, or because you had another motive. I am thoroughly reassured. I like men who are good fighters. It is a pity I shall not be able to initiate you myself into the military life. We shall probably meet again in the course of the war." "Sir", I replied, "You are wrong to consider the Frenchmen who were my friends as 'reds'. I don't think it is right to attach too much importance to old party colours. My generation, and the one before mine had to feel this socialist and revolutionary passion, but one must go beyond it." It is a pity I have forgotten the name of this lieutenant, for we parted great friends. He was a Frenchman from Morocco, ill at ease in London, where he consoled himself by riding every day in Hyde Park.

One last memory of Olympia ought not to be lost to history, it is so French and so typical of military life. Complaints arrived at Carlton Gardens concerning certain regrettable incidents between Frenchmen in London pubs. There were quarrels about whether or not to go home, what a dreadful country this England was with no red wine and how can you be expected to win a war in that case, what were the reasons for the French catastrophe – and a few glasses of whisky too many. A notice was pinned up on the board at Olympia, listing the complaints and concluding: "The undersigned Commander of the military depot at Olympia wishes to believe that no soldier so disagreeably noted by our Allies belongs to the unit under his command. If he is disappointed in this hope, he will not hesitate to apply sanctions with the utmost rigour." In which other army in the world could you find such wit and elegance of expression?

The camp at 'Delville' was in reality at Camberley in Surrey, near Aldershot, the great English military training centre. In order to confuse any German army which might land, all the names of the railway stations between London and the coast had been removed. The civilian population had for the most part been evacuated. As soon as we arrived at the camp, we were given our inoculations. Every communication with the outside world was forbidden, I could not even telephone Maurice Schumann who was expecting me for an appointment at his office. There were 7,000 to 8,000 of us there, chasseurs alpins, fuseliers, marins, légionaires and new recruits, for example 200 young men who had managed to escape from France between June and August, between 600 and 800 sailors, airmen and specialised troops (radio operators, despatch riders, etc.). I was put into the Third Company of the Chasseurs, commanded by Captain Duriffe, wounded in Flanders in the previous May, and in civilian life an Inspector of Schools for the handicapped at the Ministry of Education. He knew General de Gaulle and his family well. It was from him, although later than this particular time, that I learned of de Gaulle's private tragedy – his younger daughter was a spastic, and for this reason, Madame de Gaulle took a great interest in his work.

On the 31st we embarked at Liverpool. We had been issued with tropical kit, we had had our inoculations, we were obviously going to a hot country. Some thought we were going to Algiers, others to Syria. We had been told that Chad had rallied to the cause, and we wondered whether that was our destination. While waiting to sail, we played darts, a game unknown in France, so that I had to explain the rules. We assembled at about 7 o'clock in the evening in battledress, rifles on our shoulders. We had to take our civilian clothes to Africa with us, as nobody had thought of arranging the disposal of our effects, and we sold them to the Dutch sailors of our ship, the *Westernland.*

Chapter 20

On Board the Westernland

The Dakar Expedition

Before embarking on the ship, we had had a long wait for the train in an empty station where even the regular railwaymen were supervised by a British officer as they went about their normal work. Our kitbags were taken to the train in military trucks, while the French soldiers had but a single question: What about drinks? The English Major told me to explain to them that they could get drinks on the train once it was on its way, and that a buffet car would serve hot drinks throughout the journey. Our comrades were surprised at the amount of equipment we had been given, some of which they did not even know how to use. We each received a pair of pyjamas which some of the French soldiers thought the height of effeminate luxury – slippers, safety razors, a khaki waterproof cape against contamination by gas, and heaven knows what else! If anything had been forgotten, we could buy all sorts of things in the buffet car. The British War Office has always believed that the soldiers must be provided with every possible comfort and that they should not go short of anything if this could be provided. War having so many hardships, the Army ought not to be worried by defects in the organisation of material necessities. The French attitude by contrast was to harden the fighting soldier. Our officers were not too pleased with the efforts of our Allies for our well-being; all the Army had to do was to give the soldiers their uniforms and their arms, as for the rest they must find for themselves as best they could. The army had slept well enough in the trenches in the 1914–1918 war without pyjamas!

Our rifles were French, our machine guns model 24, modified 29, left behind in England by those soldiers who had returned to France. Since even the oldest of us did not know how to use British guns, it was better for us to be trained French-style. The disadvantage of this, which nobody foresaw, was that in 1942, when the allied landing was made in North Africa, none of us knew how to handle the British and American armament, so that we had to be trained all over again. We were too crowded in the train to sleep properly and managed as best we could, sitting upright and fully clothed. We arrived at Liverpool at dawn.

On board ship, our captain was very satisfied to see that we had been given the best cabins, for what reason we did not know, perhaps because we were not so numerous as the marines, who had to sleep in the spacious quarters normally reserved for the crew. The *Westernland* was a ship of 16,000 to 19,000 tons, of the Holland American Line; in peace time, it did the run Rotterdam to New York. It was a modern and comfortable liner, but in no way equipped for a voyage into the tropics. After ten days at sea, the heat was so intense in the cabins, which had no air conditioning, that we were allowed to sleep on the open decks.

The first day, still docked at Liverpool, we had a good view of a German air raid on the town. When we were at last at sea, General de Gaulle inspected our cabins, unannounced. I met him in the corridor, and he appeared to recognise me, unless

Lt Marrane who accompanied him whispered my name in his ear. “How do you like the French military life?” said the General. “I chose it, Sir, I am just at the beginning.” – “Is your cabin comfortable?” – “Very comfortable, Sir.” To practically everybody, he asked two or three questions of this nature. He asked Costa what his nationality was. “I am a Greek, Sir.” – “Very good.” In spite of the banal questions and answers, we were sure the General knew us, and we were delighted!

His presence on board made us realise that our mission must be important, yet before we set sail on the 1st September, at dawn, we were not sure whether he would remain with us. We were not sure either that our destination was indeed Dakar in Senegal, although the name Dakar was whispered amongst us more and more frequently. I must admit that in those days I was not very expert in the geography of Africa, neither did I realise the strategic importance of Dakar from the point of view of the United States. I soon understood, however, that Senegal was the nearest point of the black continent to the Atlantic seaboard of America and that the installation of a hostile naval or air base there would represent a direct threat to all the American lines of communication. The man who was the most certain of us all that we must be sailing for Dakar was my cabin mate Cottereau, the most original character in the company and a Zouave (special European colonial troops). He used to quarrel in the most violent language which I cannot repeat, and with everybody except myself. “There isn’t a real soldier in the company, just look at their faces!” – “But, my dear André, Shakespeare says that any man who gets himself killed is a good soldier.” – “You with your Shakespeare and the idiocies they teach you at the Sorbonne! At least you are a good fellow, joining us for what you imagine is ‘France’. Poor de Gaulle, if he wants to rebuild France with this lot! You will see – at Dakar things will have been settled before we ever get there. They are career soldiers down there. They want to chase the boches out of France, but they know they can only rely on the Senegalese out there. As for Frenchmen… I won’t destroy your illusions. One day you will learn, *mon petit,*” – we were more or less the same age – “that it is better not to marry the woman you love. You love France and alas, here you have married her.”

Nobody knew why Cottereau was *deuxième classe* in the army, considering his long military experience and his education. We noticed that the officers treated him with a certain consideration, and as for ourselves, we did not know whether he was a madman or a hero. He never answered questions about his past, which remained a mystery throughout our voyage, and which grew to the proportions of a romantic melodrama. Had he committed a *crime passionnel*? – and been acquitted by the Court of Appeal? Had he shot his colonel in an affair over a woman, after a promising début at St Cyr? He said ‘tu’ to Viroubov-Fleury, son of a great Russian émigré family, and mortal enemy of Moscovitz, possibly the *nom de guerre* of the son of a former Soviet diplomat who was also of our number, and ‘tu’ also to me, but from the others he demanded, with a courteous insult, the ‘vous’ form. His descriptions of the adventures of the French armies were so graphic that you would have thought he had fought with Napoleon at Bérésina. Viroubov called him the *grenadier de Borodino* and I called him the *Zouave de l’Alma.* But only we two, ‘l’aristo’ and ‘l’intellectuel’ respectively, had the right to make such jokes. He was promoted to sergeant major at Brazzaville and I never saw him again, although we had said that after the war "when you will be back at the Café du Dôme", I must go and see him where he lived, "a kilometre away from the cemetery at Montparnasse".

On the fifth or sixth day out, I met Lt Desjardins in the canteen where we bought our cigarettes. He had not known that I was on board, and being in intelligence, he could tell me that we were definitely en route for Dakar. We had a long walk up and down the upper deck reserved for the staff officers, to which my status as a simple volunteer with no rank would have given me no right. I told Desjardins that I would have preferred to be on a different mission. Before our departure from London, it had never occurred to me that in certain situations we would be fighting Frenchmen. He seemed certain that the Governor General Boisson[218] would decide to rally to the de Gaulle cause, since all reports concerning the rallying of French Equatorial Africa pointed in that direction in the last days of August, before we set sail. We talked over our old London topics again. Desjardins had served in the Balkan Campaign of Franchet d'Espéréy in 1918 and he knew something of the problems which preoccupied me. He promised me that he would put my name forward for a mission in Egypt as soon as we got to Dakar.

Dakar was now openly talked about. Lt Marrane told me what his plan for me was and asked me to keep absolutely silent about it. The crews, myself amongst them, who were to row the mot – or launches *(vedettes)* from the *Westernland* into Dakar harbour were also chosen.

On the tenth or eleventh day out, we rolled up our battledress, which made us much too hot, and dressed up in our tropical kit like Tartarin.[219] Our captain asked us to write down our special fields of knowledge and our academic qualifications, because some of us would be appointed to posts in the colonial government. At least a third of our company had passed their baccalauréat, or had higher qualifications, but I explained to Captain Duriffe, who interviewed me with the usual questions, that I had no desire to remain in a French colony. Those of us who were foreign volunteers had come to fight the Germans. Some of us, such as myself, were long-standing anti-fascists and anti-Nazis. We had an old score to settle. Others, who were less political than myself, but having lived for many years in France or England or Belgium, considered that they had a moral duty to support the Allies, although they were not formally naturalised in those countries. It would not be right or fitting for us to interfere in a quarrel between Frenchmen, moreover we only had the vaguest ideas about African problems. The captain appreciated this attitude but pointed out that if the French African colonies were brought into the war, this could be a factor that would contribute to the allied victory, so that special knowledge and experience of European affairs would be necessary. Africa was one of the bases from which Europe could be reconquered and men would be needed in Africa who understood the issues involved. As for specifically African problems, an intelligent European could study them on the spot.

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[218] Pierre Boisson (1894–1948), Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa and French West Africa, resisted de Gaulle's efforts and, although not at all a Vichy supporter, upon his resignation in 1943 (the Allied Forces advancing) he was imprisoned for the rest of the war.

[219] 'Tartarin' refers to Alphonse Daudet's satirical novel and its main protagonist, Tarasconi Tartarin, a Don Quixote-like bourgeois figure, who adventures in Africa, not particularly successfully.

We had rifle practice on board, we had morning parade every day, a doctor gave us a few lectures on the health precautions that would be necessary, and Lt Marrane gave us lessons in military theory. To this we added a few cabaret evenings and singsongs. The Foreign Legion and the marines who were our neighbours often came to visit us. I retain a vivid memory of the former. Practically every Légionnaire had a story to tell. Most of them were not criminals as I had imagined, after reading so many legends about them. They were stories of unhappy love, family quarrels, youthful mistakes ruining a promising career. A young priest who was our military chaplain said mass every day, which General de Gaulle never missed. Major Dreyfus, the son of the tragic hero of the affaire, formed a Jewish Association on board which met for prayers every Saturday. I think there was also a French Protestant service on Sundays, as well as the English Anglican service for Lt General Sir Edward Spears [1886–1974] and the other British liaison officers on board and finally the Dutch service for the captain of the *Westernland* and his crew.

Throughout the whole voyage, we could see a score or so other transport ships in our convoy: the Dutch *Pennland,* the Polish *Báthory,* the British cruiser *Devonshire,* the frigate *Resolution,* the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal,* three or four Free French gunboats *(avisos),* one of which was called *Commandant Duboc.* I often did guard duty outside the office of the General Staff which was installed in the first-class saloon. This was apparently because I knew both languages; I don't see how they were needed in this particular situation. Sometimes I was given a file to give a British officer who was travelling with us, and who spoke French most of the time. Usually, I had nothing much to do, and I was free to read a magazine or a novel which Lt Desjardins lent me, while I was waiting for somebody to ask me for the number of a cabin, which in any case was posted up on the notice board. The beauties of military life! I saw General de Gaulle practically every day. Practically every evening when I was on guard duty, I saw him at table, chain-smoking, discussing something with his officers and sometimes with people much too undecorated, so to say, to have such easy access to the commanding General. Little by little we became a big family, just because we were too small an army. There were nurses on board from our Auxiliary Women's Section; we only saw them rarely, but by spontaneous and general agreement, we saluted or stood up when they passed. The British on board recognised by such signs that in spite of everything, French gallantry was still alive.

On 14th or 15th September, we dropped anchor off Freetown in Sierra Leone. We remained moored in the straits off this harbour, so that we managed to get a first glimpse of Africa. General de Gaulle made a call on the British governor of Sierra Leone, but apart from him, Col Pujeaud, the chief marines officer on board of the *Westernland,* and some senior officers, nobody else was allowed to land. The natives surrounded our *Westernland* in their little boats to sell us oranges and bananas in baskets, which we drew up on deck with ropes. Their "merci Monsieur" told us that in spite of all the precautions taken, they knew who we were. The black press in America, specialising in African affairs, had reported a certain incident at Dakar, as had a black newspaper based in London. In spite of the bad English and the very naive native press of British West Africa (I was to read this press frequently later on) the indigenous newspapers appeared to base their information on the black radio and press reports in America, particularly as there were a number of black intellectuals in Sierra Leone who had studied in America. Even the simplest people, like the fruit sellers in the harbour of Freetown, followed the course of the war. I could not say the same for French Equatorial Africa, but the people of Nigeria, Ghana (still called the Gold Coast in those days) and Sierra Leone were certainly newspaper readers and listened to the radio, although otherwise they seemed to be somewhat primitive. Their sympathies were in any case on the Allied side. I heard shouts of "Vive de Gaulle! Vive la France!" The secret of our destination had been so badly kept that I distinctly heard a black man in a boat tell another one: "French people for Dakar." In peacetime, this harbour no doubt sheltered many ships going to Dakar or coming from Dakar. At the present moment they were rejoicing at the thought that normal trading would be resumed. They probably did not understand that we were Gaullists and that de Gaulle himself was on board our ship. But the name they knew best was certainly that of de Gaulle, since the British radio talked about him so much.

We left Freetown probably on the 17th September at about 6 o'clock in the evening. General de Gaulle called all of us together, as the coastline faded away in the tropical dusk, and made a speech. Without mentioning the name of Dakar, he outlined the coming situation in which we would find "the melancholy sight of Frenchmen obstructing our future victory". Now this victory was certain in his eyes. Great Britain deserved to be victorious because of her courage "and we must never admit that France is less worthy of victory". We saluted the General, and went back to our cabins, or the saloons where we hold our social evenings on board the ship.

The critical night came, I think, twenty-four hours later. I was on guard duty; I had the list of the liaison officers whom I was to awaken. Towards 1 o'clock in the morning, Admiral Cunningham came in a British launch and boarded the *Westernland* and I directed him to General de Gaulle's cabin. Towards 3.30 AM I saw the British launch approach again and the *Westernland* stopped for Admiral Cunningham to transfer to it. At 4 AM or a few minutes before that, we were sent back to our cabins. Usually the night guard duty lasted until 7 o'clock in the morning. I hardly got any sleep at all, lying down fully clothed and with my boots on. We had breakfast as the first ray of sunshine appeared; the Dutch sailors came up to shake hands and say goodbye. The nurses assembled on deck near where Lt Marrane had stationed his little boarding party, who had volunteered to row General de Gaulle ashore at Dakar from the *Westernland,* when we got near enough to the coast: Fleury-Viroubov, myself and three other men who could row. He insisted that I should get a little sleep because I had spent the night on my feet, but with the best will in the world I should not have been able to sleep in a motorboat and it goes without saying that I could not slip away to my cabin at such a moment. The nurses offered us tea or chocolate to drink, but in spite of the kindness of these ladies, nobody had any thought of accepting a drink or anything else. On the horizon, we could see Dakar. It was about 6 AM by now, I think. It was quite cold, as it always is at dawn in this climate. The sunrise made us feel somewhat anxious, the coast was only ten kilometres away. The plan seemed to be obvious. We were supposed to disembark on a spot outside the harbour, at a point on the coast which was thinly guarded. Then our despatch carriers on their motorcycles, our military trucks which we had on board the *Westernland* and our armoured cars would make a rapid advance on the town, while infantry units, split up into patrols, would advance from other directions; our friends on African soil would join our forces as we moved forward. We did not think would be able to capture the town without any resistance being offered, but we were virtually certain that a considerable number of army and naval units would make common cause with us. What worried us most was the daylight. We were evidently not going to have the benefit of the darkness. Yet we had been ready before 5 AM and the Marines from 3 AM. We could hear some distant gunfire. What was happening? Had they fired on us? Or did this gunfire mean that they had rallied to our Free French Forces?

Our little group could not move far from our motor launch, but I managed to meet a legionnaire; who said to me in Hungarian, knowing me just well enough to be aware of my nationality: “Things have gone wrong. There won’t be many of us for launch. They have fixed on us. It would have been better to fight the *Boches.* Never mind. For the honour of Hungary, let us do the best we can. Some of the Frenchmen here don’t trust you, because you have never been a soldier, but I told them that you are the sort that doesn’t talk much but stands firm when the need arises!” – “Are you sure they are firing on us?” – “What a question! Ceremonial salvoes sound quite different! You aren’t frightened, I hope?” – “Certainly not, but I would have preferred to be killed by the Nazis rather than by Frenchmen at Dakar, with whom I have no quarrel.” – “But the Dakar French have been bought over by the Nazis!” – “That’s absurd, they think they can stay neutral in a war between Britain and the Nazis.” – “They are wrong then. The Germans will conquer them from the left and the British from the right, although the British don’t wish them any harm. They have enough countries and ports, why should they want French colonies?”

The distant gunfire grew louder, then it stopped. Were we nearer to the capture of Dakar, or were we further from doing so? A few wounded men were brought on board *Westernland* from a motor launch. At 9 o’clock coffee was served, since our breakfast had been so early. An aeroplane which we could not identify flew overhead. We were ordered to go back to our cabins so that we were less conspicuous for observer planes. The heat and fatigue sent me to sleep from 10 o’clock to 12.30. After lunch there was another order: Get into the motor launches! Our Lewis guns (*fusils mitrailleurs,* a French invention) were already in the boats. The coast, which was invisible in the heat at 12.30, could be seen again by 3 o’clock in the afternoon. We sailed along it for about two hours. Apart from a single car on a coast road, we could see no trace of human life. The *Westernland* was by now only five or six kilometres off the coast, and we were expecting at any minute to be ordered to launch the little boats. 2nd Lt Bergeret, who was very young, was inconsolable; one more fight which had come to nothing! He wanted to know whether I was a good walker in a tropical climate. I claimed his anxiety by saying that I had been a good mountain walker since my childhood, I could ride, and I had taken lessons in fencing at the gymnasium. I don’t know whether I managed to allay his military fears entirely on the subject of intellectuals. Our companion Moscovitz circulated from one motor launch to the other; with admirable psychological insight, he made an effort at small talk to pass the time and he took our names and addresses so that he could find us again when the war was over. 2nd Lt Bergeret expressed satisfaction that I spoke French to Sergeant Moscovitz. I explained to him that my mother tongue had no affinity with Russian and that Russians and Hungarians can only communicate with each other in the major Western European languages. I added that the origin of the Hungarian language is much discussed by *savants,* and that it had affinities with Turkoman; I do not know how many times I had to explain this to foreigners who wanted absolutely to know whether we were Slavs or Germans, but never would I have imagined that I should be discussing comparative linguistics at the very moment of disembarking off the West coast of Africa in a Dutch motor launch commanded by a military force of French rebels. This situation was the most unforeseen one in which I found myself in the whole of my life!

The next day the *Westernland* sailed along very slowly, sometimes quite near to the coast. Normal life resumed on board. The day following that, an order of the day by General de Gaulle was pinned up in several places on the ship, with a bulletin summing up what had happened at Dakar. So, we knew definitely that there would be no landing. Almost four weeks at sea had made us so tired that by now we had become somewhat indifferent to whatever was happening. Most of us approved the General's decision, but some grumbled, especially Cottereau, who managed to quarrel both with Fleury-Viroubov and me, his two confidants, on this occasion ("Africa will cure you both of your fine ideas, my dear Russian aristo and my dear intellectual from Central Europe and the Café du Dôme. It is a country for hotheads.")

Before landing at Freetown, towards which we now had to sail southwards again, we tried to make our appearance look a little more civilised. Our hair had not been cut since the Olympia days, our shirts had not been ironed since the Delville camp time and had only been washed in a very inexpert way by ourselves. A non-commissioned officer in the Dutch navy told me in confidence that there was a laundry and a barber's shop aboard, but that these services had been reserved for higher-ranking officers and the ladies of the Auxiliary Section, for fear that we should overwhelm them. Now that the long voyage was nearly at an end, the shortage of soap and other such luxuries did not matter anymore. I immediately told a few friends, in confidence, whom the Dutchman thought equally worthy of the secret. The bathrooms, which had mostly been kept locked, to save water on board, were now unlocked and started functioning. Our food improved. All this consoled us for the failure at Dakar. At the barber's I met Desjardins and a midshipman in the Navy who was with him. The latter had rallied to us at Dakar, and he joined our Intelligence Service.

The fact that Desjardins treated me as a friend made the midshipman speak out very freely. He explained to me that the rallying of Senegal to de Gaulle had seemed highly likely and had been thoroughly prepared. Such had been the intention of the Governor-General Boisson and the military leaders, at the beginning. But it had been talked about too much. During the three weeks that we had been at sea, the situation had changed. They had not known the exact time of our departure from Liverpool, but the Germans had probably observed us from the air, which was easy with a big convoy like ours (indeed we had seen two or three German planes during the first ten days at sea).

Governor-General Boisson had been told by Vichy that the French colonies would be defended against the British just as much as against the Germans. There were no Germans at Dakar to the knowledge of the midshipman, although rumours were circulating about certain individual German specialists. If we had captured Dakar, he said, it would have been difficult to hold it without being able to rally the whole of French West Africa, and this would probably have provoked the bombardment or occupation of Algeria by the Germans. In the Navy, there was a certain anti-British feeling ever since July 1940, when Churchill had reluctantly ordered the British to put the French Navy out of action at Mers-el-Kabir; this was a factor of some importance. It was believed, however, he said in conclusion, that there was a secret Pétain – de Gaulle agreement, which could improve the situation later.

Chapter 21

Africa

Once more we dropped anchor at Freetown about 30th September, and this time we were allowed on shore for three or four days. Then we left for Pointe Noire in the French Congo, where we arrived about 10th October. Before we reached Pointe Noire, General de Gaulle, his personal staff and the legionnaires, as well as roughly half the Women's Auxiliary Section – there were a dozen of these ladies on board – disembarked from the *Westernland* when we made a short stop at Douala, off the coast of Cameroon, without entering the harbour. When we crossed the Equator, we celebrated the traditional ceremony of crossing the line. Major Perrin, seriously wounded in the Dakar engagement, was present at our baptism by Neptune, smothered in his bandages and attended by two nurses.

We entered Brazzaville, the capital of the French Congo and the administrative centre of French Equatorial Africa, one Saturday morning in mid-October, cheered by Europeans and natives alike. The European Club at Brazzaville organised a fine concert in our honour and invitations to dine with European families arrived daily. I remember with particular pleasure the hospitable home of Colonel-Doctor Jean Pichat and his wife. I saw this very nice couple again towards the end of the war in Britain, where Madame Pichat organised a welfare service at the Red Cross for the children of liberated France, and the Colonel was busy buying pharmaceutical supplies for the French hospitals. I saw them again in Paris in 1952 and on several of my subsequent visits to Paris until their deaths. As far as I remember, the colonel, who later became General Pichat, was appointed head of the Health Service in Dakar in 1943 and spent several years in French West Africa. A prisoner of war in the First World War, he had been in the same camp as Captain de Gaulle and he was a personal friend of Governor-General Boisson, so that certain rumours were current in September 1940 concerning his role as intermediary in Senegal. I know nothing about this. I can, however, say that all the well-informed and responsible colonials were agreed that Governor-General Boisson was in favour of French Equatorial Africa joining de Gaulle and that, before 21st September, French West Africa would receive General de Gaulle and his men with open arms. They were puzzled as to why Boisson changed his mind between August and September, and he was much criticised for this. In the serious articles in *Le Courrier d'Afrique,* the newspaper of the Belgian Congo, the affair of the 21st September at Dakar was also seen in the same light.

My military life in Africa between 1940 and 1943 was far from being glorious. We found the colonies of French Equatorial Africa in a deplorable state. They lacked practically everything. The towns where we were garrisoned, such as Brazzaville and later Port Lamy, had a European population of one to two hundred families, who were living comfortably, but with our arrival the European population increased tenfold, so that there was a shortage of accommodation, clothes and supplies of every kind. Our uniforms and underwear, provided by the British military authorities, wore out and were difficult to replace, even impossible to replace in some centres. We had wretched barracks, hastily improvised, out of date weapons, empty shops. We had to make the best of it with nothing. Some of our barracks were hastily converted school buildings for native children, and we even had to wait until we could get a supply of beds to sleep on. Washing facilities consisted of the daily shower, but shaving was a problem. Soap and shaving cream, razorblades and so on were in short supply. There were a few army doctors, but they were too busy to deal with everybody's troubles, and as regards our own company, we only had a fourth-year medical student, who had no experience of tropical diseases, and who was only available for a short period. The chemists' shops had inadequate supplies of pills and drugs and all other medical and pharmaceutical necessities, owing to the greatly increased population. Supply routes from the Belgian Congo and British West Africa took time to organise. In 1942, when an American Mission arrived, they brought ample medical supplies, including more effective drugs against tropical diseases of every kind and especially they helped us to construct better living accommodation – for example they told us that no water should ever be left about anywhere to discourage the mosquitoes which caused malaria, and that as far as possible wooden doors, window frames, cupboards, etc. should be replaced by metal-framed double glazing, or be constructed of metal, to prevent the ravages of the ants.

On the other hand, we were luckier than the British or the Americans in the matter of food. Where the British, for example, imported tins of bully beef and cans of beer, the French sent out soldiers to shoot birds and antelopes for roasting, the natives sold us chickens and eggs. Vegetables were short because of the climate, but we could buy plenty of bananas from the European gardens, we had plenty of oranges and pineapples from the native markets, and we even had avocado pear served on our menu in the mess. We could have wine, which the Portuguese brought in from the neighbouring colonies, and in the mess, we could have a bottle whenever we liked for a small charge. In Brazzaville there was a European restaurant where we could go after five o'clock for drinks or coffee, in Fort Lamy [N'Djaména] in Chad there was nothing because the 'fort' was on the edge of the desert. When we were free on Sundays, we would cross the Congo River from Brazzaville on the right bank to Léopoldville on the left bank (now Kinshasha) in the Belgian Congo, where there was a good European hotel, also a good Belgian *Konditorei* for coffee and cakes. When we were travelling in Cameroon or Ubangui – later the Central African Republic, then later still the 'Empire' of the now deposed Bokassa – we ate in European restaurants (there were no native restaurants, and anyhow in those days the food would have been too different).

The exaggerated pride of our leaders insisted upon our independence, so that all British offers of help with serious organisation were refused. We only began to be properly organised towards the end of 1942 (after the Allied landings in North Africa) with the help of the American military missions sent to us, but by then the early Gaullists like myself were already exhausted by malaria because no preparations whatsoever had been made against the climate. The usual French military training was simply not possible under that climate, whereas the majority of our officers, and in particular the non-commissioned officers, had no idea of adapting their methods to the climate and the special needs of a war in Africa. Our specialised knowledge in various fields remained virtually unused. Then in 1942 came a completely unexpected turn in events in the war, when North Africa was liberated. We had believed rumours in November 1940 about a secret Pétain – de Gaulle agreement. If French unity had been fully restored at the beginning of 1941, we could have done great things. But a heap of new problems arose which were unforeseen in 1940. Russia had become an ally when Hitler invaded the USSR in 1941; the pro-German party in Vichy (Brinon, Luchaire, Darnand, Doriot) were not satisfied with the armistice of 1940, but waged Hitler's war for him, so to say. The grouping around General Giraud under American auspices in November 1942, the re-emergence in London of all the farmer factions in the political parties of the Third Republic – all these factors meant that our movement, which at the beginning had been exclusively military and with a purely French outlook on Europe, evolved into a sort of coalition of interested parties, similar to that of the old-style Republic.

There were men of good faith in all the groupings. I would go so far as to say that even in the pro-German party there were cases which I understand without excusing. For example, I knew Jean Luchaire round about 1930 (he was executed after the war) and French intellectuals of his type. From the personal angle, they were cultivated and humane men, whom I believe to be incapable of methodical criminal actions in the Nazi manner. Their grave fault was that intellectual impulsiveness which is so common amongst Frenchmen. As soon as they have a new idea, or a new experience which may in reality be quite ordinary, and at second hand, they transform it into paradoxes which seem to be brilliant and daring. Then they become intoxicated with their own words, their original new formulas with which they try to scandalise the bourgeois of the older generation in the press. I have known Frenchmen who became Anglophiles after two or three weeks at a summer school at Oxford, or Austrian monarchists after a couple of visits to the Hofburg in Vienna, Frenchmen who became excessively Hungarophile because of certain charming acquaintances made in Budapest, Frenchmen who became communist because of a visit to Moscow. So that I am not surprised that there were even Germanophile Frenchmen. In other countries, these sudden enthusiasms and sympathies are the privilege of the ladies. But the art of pleasing, which is usually a feminine one, is highly developed in Frenchmen, perhaps because in this race, which is essentially virile and even essentially military, the idea of pleasing a woman is always present in a Frenchman's mind. So in France they fall into the most serious intellectual mistakes, not to say moral ones, because every idea which is new seems to be original, daring, courageous, paradoxical; I cannot explain otherwise the tragic case of Robert Brassillach, a literary man of a certain reputation (also executed after the war). Then there was my old companion on the *Westernland* Cottereau; I think that perhaps Darnand, a political and military adventurer, who organised a French Legion to fight on the German side, was a sort of Cottereau, a hothead loving wars and women, and bearing the physical and moral scars they brought him.

I watched the evolution in our situation between 1940 and 1945 with the greatest regret. Happily, after my tour of duty in French Equatorial Africa was terminated in the spring of 1943 because of my health, I was able to concentrate entirely on affairs in Europe, as

I shall tell. While remaining certain that de Gaulle was the best guardian of permanently French interests, I was not interested in being a Gaullist against the Vichyists, the Giraudists or the Pétainists. None of this was any concern of mine, however distressing it was for the foreign volunteers in the Free French Forces, though the historian in me could console himself by finding analogies in French history – the Fronde and le grand Condé for example – to explain it all.

I finished the war as a commissioned officer, *rédacteur de première classe,* a civil service rank, to the Cabinet of the Provisional Government of General de Gaulle. My work from 1943 to 1946 dealt with the German and Austrian press, the evolution of the war in Central Europe, sometimes affairs in Italy and lastly – up to the final liquidation of our London services in May 1946 – the political organisation of the occupation of the French Zone in Germany and Austria. All this I shall tell in its proper place.

But now, to return to my military life in Africa. One day in 1941, General Legentilhomme visited our 17th Infantry Regiment at Port Lamy, the capital of Chad.[220] He gave a talk on the military situation in Syria – where some Free French units had joined the British in an attack on the Vichy French, ready for the Allied campaign in Greece – to the Europeans of the regiment at the European Club, and afterwards we drank an apéritif. Thanking him, Colonel Leclerc as he then was (Leclerc was his *nom de guerre,* he was really Comte Jacques Philippe Leclerc de Hautecloque, and was to be made posthumously Maréchal de France by Parliament in 1947 or 48, when he perished in an aeroplane accident)[221] made a short speech about the regiment and Chad; and referred to the neighbouring French colonies. I remember the following passage from that speech which drew applause, contrary to military custom, which required a respectful silence during and after a speech of a high-ranking officer: “On one of the frontiers of this territory of Chad, we have our comrades of Vichy, our comrades of tomorrow. They are, I am sure, only waiting for the moment when they can join us, and we are only waiting for the moment when we shall see all good Frenchmen on the same side.” I cannot remember the exact date of this event, but it was after the operations in Syria and before those in Madagascar.

In 1942, by now a sergeant, I was one of the auxiliary secretaries to the General Staff. I was attached to the liaison section of La France Combattante, as we later came to be known, with the GHQ of the British General Sir George Gifford, at Accra on the Gold Coast (now Ghana). In British territory, I was accommodated in a British camp and ate in a British mess. The camps were not very comfortable, although the NAAFI huts – i.e. the British Army shops – were well supplied with cigarettes, drinks and personal comforts. I did not like my work at Accra. Already in my gymnasium days, always top of the class in modern languages and history and often in Latin, I was – with monotonous regularity – bottom or next to bottom in mathematics. New in Accra, my work dealt almost solely in coding and decoding telegrams, and only rarely were there any translations to do. As well as this, I had more and more frequent attacks of malaria, after spending two years in a climate which did not suit me at all. Finally, I became impatient in the highest degree; affairs in Eastern Europe were entering a critical phase and here I was, cut off from every contact with them because of the situation in French West Africa which did not interest me, in which a foreign volunteer could not intervene without giving offence and which I did not properly understand.

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[220] General Paul Louis Legentilhomme (1884–1975), supporter of de Gaulle in Africa and later in Europe, one of the highest-ranking officers of the Free French Forces.

[221] Menczer’s note is correct. De Hautecloque (1902–1947) was one of the most successful French commanders. After the war, he also served in Vietnam, but died in Algeria.

As if this was not enough, my superior officer, a major and an engineer in civilian life in France, who shared none of my interests, continually teased me about my Catholic 'superstitions' and the 'illusions' of my mind. I think he was the only superior officer in the Free French Forces with whom I was unable to live on friendly terms, although he was a good man and a good companion when the mood took him. In these telegrams which I decoded, there was a great deal of information about French West Africa. It came from the British documentation service at Accra, which was attached to the British High Command, West Africa, of General Sir George Gifford regularly, and partly from the General Consulate of the United States at Dakar, since one of the officials there made two or three visits to Accra between January and September 1942. Virtually all reports said the same thing: there was a current of anti-British and anti-Gaullist opinion in the colonies and in the navy at Dakar, whilst within the frontiers of Chad, practically all the officers, especially the young subalterns, seemed to be enthusiastic Gaullists, only awaiting the hour for action.

From time to time a small contingent of black Africans from the Ivory Coast, administered by the Vichy Government, passed through Accra to join us; we had to arrange their passage by sea from Takoradi on the British Gold Coast to Pointe Noire in the French Congo. I remember a Free French regimental sergeant major who told me of his experiences at an evening dance given by the British Club and the French Club combined; he was positive that French West Africa – i.e. Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and some minor territories such as Mauretania, a Moroccan protectorate, all held by Vichy – was favourable to de Gaulle, but less sure of the authorities in Dakar. A little before the American landing in Algeria, I accompanied a contingent of eighty black African infantrymen from Takoradi to Pointe Noire; they had recently crossed the frontier of the Côte d'Ivoire under the command of a European sergeant major and a Senegalese sergeant. This was in September 1942. I gave the files concerning them to the sergeant major, who was to deliver them to HQ at Brazzaville when they reached the French Congo, and I arranged accommodation for them at the British camp at Takoradi before we all boarded a Belgian ship which came from England. Travelling on this ship was Captain Beaumelais, new to Africa, a barrister in civilian life and aide-de-camp to the National Commissioner for War, General Legentilhomme; there were also several Belgian and Polish officers. Concerning the latter, since there were too many Polish officers to be used in the Polish army available, they were transferred to the Free French Forces, because they all spoke French in that generation.

One more matter I should raise here because it is mentioned by General de Gaulle in his War Memoirs (Vol. II: *Le Salut,* pp. 218–219). Under the orders of a Major Ponton, a Free French radio station functioned at Accra, directing our propaganda to Vichy-held French West Africa. The assistant head of this service was Stéphane Manier, a Paris journalist and formerly on the staff of the Radiodiffusion Française. I knew Manier well. He was already rather elderly, and the father of a non-commissioned officer who was a volunteer in our Free French Navy. He was French, but dark-skinned from a mother who may have been an Egyptian or an Algerian or possibly a Lebanese, I do not know for certain, in any case he knew the Eastern Mediterranean very well. His sympathies were vaguely socialist, but he did not understand politics very well. He was the author of several books of musical criticism and history of the drama. His interests were purely musical and literary. So, there is no need to look for a political explanation for his tragic end, which General de Gaulle suggests. Like most people of artistic temperament, he suffered from over-sensitiveness. He thought he saw colour prejudice in the officers of the French Mission in British West Africa, of which he was the only civilian member, racial prejudice also amongst the charming British and French ladies of the Club, which was however more often used by cultivated black Africans than it was by us, and where nobody took any notice of Manier's dark skin. Otherwise, he was an intelligent man, with much heart and a lively mind, whom I enjoyed meeting at the musical evenings at the club, one of our rare forms of entertainment.

When he arrived in Britain after the Mission in Accra was closed down, after the American landings of November 1942, he was asked to show his residence permit. He did not have one, since he had not stayed in England in wartime, but had come to Accra from Lisbon. He showed his Accra papers and his papers concerning his official mission to Carlton Gardens. Regulations laid down that all foreigners belonging to a nation "occupied by the enemy" must be interrogated by the British security services in a building called Patriotic School, because in the previous century it had functioned as an army and navy orphanage. The only exceptions to this regulation were people who possessed a residence permit "valid until further notice" (such as I possessed myself) issued by the Home Office after September 1939. Since these interrogations lasted quite a long time, it was inevitable that a foreigner of the said category, arriving in a crowded ship, had to stay for several days in the Patriotic School. The British police saw to their personal comfort in every possible way, but they were obliged to travel from Liverpool to London under escort and to remain incommunicando until their interrogation. General de Gaulle criticises these British security procedures in his *Mémoires de Guerre.* It is sad that nobody seems to have prepared the unfortunate Manier for this unpleasant but quite normal administrative routine in time of war. Thousands of Frenchmen submitted to this routine, for which the Home Office officials gave their polite excuses. The proof that this particular Free Frenchman was not treated as a suspect is only too obvious: they left him his razor blades and he killed himself. A man of letters, such as he was, had hundreds of notes and letters on him, which he kept carefully. This prolonged the interrogation, but the fact remains that the interrogation of Free Frenchmen was in every case kind courteous and friendly. I am absolutely certain that poor Manier had nothing to fear, or to reproach himself with. I pay this tribute of affection to an unfortunate friend, the victim of his persecution complex, as well as of the misunderstandings of those memorable years 1940–1945.

In conclusion, the main activity of the de Gaulle forces in Africa on which the Free French strategy was based, was to find a road through the jungle and the desert in order to link up with the British Eighth Army who were attacking the German and Italian forces in Libya (still an Italian colony at that time). In other words, we prepared the long trek from the South to join in the Libyan Campaign; while the British prepared he way to ultimate victory from the North and North-West of Africa, ready for the Allied landing in Sicily in the summer of 1943. The Americans, with some British units, landed in Algiers in November 1942, followed by Allied landings in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia in 1943. The French GHQ and all the Staff officers of the Free French Forces were based on Brazzaville, the administrative centre of the French Congo, but the colony of Chad was more important because from there units under the command of General Leclerc could attack Libya from the south and establish contact with the British Eighth Army in Egypt. My share in all this consisted of occasional patrols in the desert along the road from Chad into Libya and training native soldiers in the use of antitank guns. I missed the final stages of the long march with General Leclerc into Libya because by that time I was so weakened after nineteen attacks of malaria that I was declared unfit for further military service in that tropical climate, and I was sent to Pointe Noire to await a ship sailing to Europe.

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Chapter 22

African Memories

The Italian prisoners of war captured in a Free French attack led by Colonel d'Ornano on Italian fortresses in the Tibesti desert, in the south of Libya, lived in camps in Fort Lamy [N'Djaména], the capital of Chad, or else in Brazzaville. (Throughout my narrative I use the old names as I know them, to preserve the contemporary flavour. Later on, of course, the newly independent African countries adopted new names for their towns. I also use the word 'natives' throughout, as all Europeans did in the colonial tradition of the time.) I had no official appointment to deal with these Italian prisoners, but unofficially I talked to them as I spoke Italian, because they were decent fellows who had gone to war reluctantly, and were very homesick for Italy. One day at the end of 1942, an Italian officer of field rank, a colonel I think, approached me in Brazzaville. He used the same library as I did at the Mission House of the Fathers of the Holy Ghost, and so he knew me by sight. He told me that civilised Europeans, such as he and I certainly were, did not wish for the destruction of Italy. If the Allies reached any part of Italy, it was almost certain that the sympathies of Italian soldiers would be on our side. He told me that I should pass this message on to the head of the American Mission in Brazzaville. I did so, but at the same time I felt obliged to report it to a French officer on the General Staff. I have no idea how far that information was used, but I can claim that the first suggestion of Italian co-belligerence on the Allied side was probably made to me!

In April 1941, I was 'conditionally' baptised a Catholic (i.e. in case my Calvinist one was not valid). This took place while I was still under medical treatment in a hospital in Sierra Leone. I will probably never know whether any other white man was ever received as a convert in Freetown, Sierra Leone, at the Franciscan missionary church of St Anthony, the congregation of which was entirely black, consisting of recent native converts and possibly of such Catholic natives whose ancestors were baptised by the Portuguese or the Spaniards, before the colony became British in the eighteenth century. I also wonder whether any other Benedictine monk other than Father Grimbaldstone, who performed the ceremony, has ever baptised anyone in a Franciscan church. Later on, when I was confirmed in London at the Brompton Oratory in 1948 (because I had never found an opportunity before) and became a 'soldier of Christ',[222] I thought all the time, to the neglect of the sermon, of my African baptism, for soldiering is inseparable in my mind from my conversion. I was 'received' in 1941 in tropical khaki, which I had never worn before in such a strict regulation way and with such solemnity, as on that day under the hottest sun I remember, even in Africa.

In Sierra Leone I remember Hyppolite, Jacques, Emile, Arthur, Europeans of my company, whose surname I forget and probably did not know very well at the time, also the Spanish volunteer Riesco, Adjudant Sylvie and the French Mission, the young

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[222] By the Sacrament of Confirmation, Catholics 'become soldiers of Christ' – a metaphor.

English student and medical orderly who took my blood tests in the hospital, and who told me – on noting Maritain's *Humanisme Intégral* on my night table – that he was a recent convert.[223] I remember also Abbé Neumann, an Alsatian, one of our army chaplains, the young French detachment in the harbour of Freetown, the sailors from the Portuguese boat who greeted us with "Vive la France!" and "Vive de Gaulle!" whom we answered by shouting "Viva el Portugal amigo!", the Lebanese Sélim, the Moslem Haussa soldiers, the Indian fortune tellers, the black boys Willy and James, the Liberians in old American top hats. Above all I remember curious half-dreams in high malarial fever, and also the unpleasant experience of silly and petty intrigues of colonial life, and of the slow demoralisation which sets in when military servitudes are needlessly imposed by the lack of proper organisation, and the lack of a proper and immediate military task.

Another memory which goes back to 1941 I can never forget. We used to have our anti-tank gun practice at Port Lamy under the command of Colonel Leclerc (as his rank then was, he did not become a General until the following year). He used to inspect our guns, and one day when the news was announced over the radio that Britain and the United States had declared war on Hungary and Finland because these two countries were fighting the Russians, the new ally of the West, Col. Leclerc asked me whether, after, this unexpected development, I wished to remain in the service. My reply was that no situation could be imagined in which I would have to fight against Hungarians, or that Hungarians would have to fight Free France, and therefore I intended to continue in the French army until victory. He accepted my declaration with the words: "Heureusement pour moi, je m'ai aucune troupe hongroise en face de moi [I am lucky that I am not facing Hungarian troops]." I was touched by this manifestation of sympathy for Hungary on the part of a French military leader. He knew that Hungary was a fundamentally Catholic nation and as a very fervent Catholic his sympathy was a natural one. In Fort Lamy he laid the foundation stone of a new cathedral to be called Notre Dame des Sables.[224] After the war he was made Maréchal de France *à titre posthume,* a title which can only be conferred by Parliament, when he was killed in an air crash over Algeria, and he was buried in the Invalides in Paris. Leclerc, [Jean] de Lattre de Tassigny [1889–1952] and [Alphonse Pierre] Juin [1888–1967] were the three French Maréchaux de France of the Second World War, and they all three fought for La France Libre.

Some people told me that over twenty-five, one is not likely to get accustomed to the African climate, but other people say on the contrary that it is the older generation which is less likely to contract the worst kind of African diseases. The American officers who came to Africa in the last phase of my stay there (end of 1942, beginning of 1943) were mostly of the opinion that with proper medical care, the old dangers of Africa are now conquered, and indeed they had fewer people in hospital than we did; by the end of 1940 in the ill-famed Gabon region, half of my company were in hospital with malaria, and two of them died early in the following year.

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[223] *Humanisme intégral: problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté.* Paris: Fernand Aubier. Two translations: *True Humanism.* London: Bles, 1938. Translated by Margot Robert Adamson; *Integral Humanism. Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968. Translated by Joseph W. Evans.

[224] Today's Cathedral of N'Djaména was consecrated first in 1965, bearing the title of Our Lady of Peace, after much destruction, its renovation is underway.

If mosquitoes and other pests like the tsetse fly which causes sleeping sickness (rare in Europeans, nonetheless one of our Italian officers, a prisoner of war, died of it, although the Portuguese, as a neutral power, offered to provide a place to Lisbon to fly him back to Italy) and the termites which reduce wooden furniture to powder, could be discounted, Africa would be a magnificent place. I shall never forget the huge rocks, the unending forests, the giant rivers, the purple sun of the mornings and evenings. It is true that the white people who lived there in those days, their intrigues, their jealousies, their silly boasts and their conceit, and their lack of any sense of humour or of delicacy was as bad as the daily struggle against the mosquitoes. There are a few colonial heroes, Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza [1852–1905], for example, who founded the French colony in Equatorial Africa without committing any atrocities, and a few noble adventurers – soldiers, missionaries, colonial administrators such as the German Berthold Deimling [1853–1944], who governed Cameroon early in the twentieth century and later founded the Republican Militia, *Reichsbanner schwarz-rot-gold,* in the days of the Weimar Republic in Germany. The remainder were a horrid crowd, drunkards, brutes, charlatans and intriguers, whose only interest in life was to get a few more pennies by getting their competitors out of a job. But perhaps in a sense, this is human society everywhere. I must add that outside French Equatorial Africa, I found colonial people a little more to my liking. In French Equatorial Africa the small businessman dominated the scene; and what was worse, the climate of Africa was a pretext for him to pose as a Renaissance character, a sort of colonial condottiere who boasted about his indecent tricks, of which he would have been ashamed in his metropolitan Café du Commerce.

In the French administration at Brazzaville in those years there was a black Governor-General, Félix Éboué [1884–1944], but he came from Martinique, and was therefore of superior education to the Congolese. I remember some black doctors who were Senegalese. Among all the Congolese, Ubangui-Sharians and men from Chad, there was not a single officer or higher-ranking civil servant. A few men from Gabon were post office clerks, customs officers and bank clerks, especially as in Gabon there were many half-castes, and I also met people from Cameroon in similar positions. In the whole French Equatorial Africa of de Gaulle's time, there was only one officer of field rank, and he was a half-caste, a Lt Colonel at Brazzaville, but if I remember correctly, his mother was from Martinique and not from Africa. The fact that the Belgians in the Belgian Congo had omitted to bring the natives gradually into their administration and gendarmerie was held against them when the Belgians decolonised, precipitately soon after the war, the first European power to do so, but it was not altogether their fault. Theoretically, it is right that individual natives should be appointed to higher posts in increasing numbers, but this was not the central problem anywhere in Africa in those days.

The native intellectuals remained isolated in those days, and this was the real central problem in Africa, so that it looked as though there could never be African nations, such as we see have evolved today. There was a fair number of black intellectuals in Senegal, in French Equatorial Africa, a great many in the British Gold Coast (Ghana now), also in Nigeria, but few of them knew much about their own countries, and the ideas they cherished were American, or English, or French ideas which they had learned about in the course of their training abroad, or in institutions such as the Achimota College in Accra, Gold Coast, staffed mainly by Europeans. These European-trained intellectuals were rather unrepresentative of their countries. In Senegal there was a Europeanised minority in the 'four cities' of those days (Dakar, Rufisque, St Louis, and the fourth I have forgotten [Gorée]). Nigeria and the Gold Coast had training schools and colleges, while Achimota College at Accra later became a native university. The Belgian Congo (capital: Léopoldville, later Kinshasha) began round about 1950 to train a native intelligentsia, especially a native clergy, and so did Cameroon (capital: Yaoundé). On the whole, I found that after one or two years of travelling I knew more about Africa than the Africans did who had been trained in Europe, and who, despite their black skin, lived like Englishmen and Frenchmen amongst their fellow Africans. Thus, I met a few times in Accra a black judge who had qualified at Cambridge University, and regularly took his cup of afternoon tea in the English manner in his office, a man of good English culture, but knowing less than I did of the African scene.

In Cameroon there were in 1941 some old native chiefs who in the era of the German colonisation had a sort of aristocratic status and could be considered native intellectuals. I remember one in particular who always moved about in a rickshaw. It is mostly very difficult to tell the age of an African, but I think that he must have been about sixty in 1941, and he told me that he had been a pageboy at the Court of Stuttgart. (Douala, the port, had a garrison and administration from Württemberg in those days, Yaoundé, present capital, had a Bavarian one.) He had also been presented to the Kaiser in Berlin, he told me, before being sent to the Hamburg Academy for Colonial Studies, the institution which trained the German colonial officials, so that he could teach African languages to the students there. The French continued to pay the old chief's salary, or perhaps pension; his enmity would have been a burden on our administration. Besides this old chief and others like him, there were some black seminarists in Cameroon in 1941 and possibly some of them were already ordained priests.

Although in the 1940s Africa was no longer as remote as it used to be in former days, the railway system could not overcome the problems of that continent, because it was extremely difficult to build railways across the desert, the jungle and the rocky regions. There were only a few relatively short railway routes, for example, Djibouti in Somalia, to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, Pointe Noire, the port in the French Congo to Brazzaville, the capital, Douala, the port of Cameroon to Yaoundé, the capital, in the mountains. Car roads and the aeroplane solved the transport problem, which was the main obstacle to an African civilisation. However, the fact still remains that the African is fitter for physical work and the European for mental work in such a climate. The other fact which human effort can hardly change is that sleeping sickness, leprosy and similar curses affected many of the African races, both physically and mentally. Medical science can perhaps find the right treatment for these terrible diseases but cannot undo old hereditary effects they exercised on some of the African races – perhaps for one or two thousand years. Nor can we undo all the effects of promiscuity, perversions of every kind, the practices of secret societies, heathen sects, etc. among the Africans. The deepest problems of Africa still lie elsewhere – in the fields which the intellectual African politicians nowadays never mention. Africa has its mysterious and dark atavisms, its superstitions, its instincts, its secret leagues, its sects, a psychological inheritance which we hardly know and only Africans could explain. There is also a tribal organisation of property in Africa of which we know next to nothing, an African customary law which, no doubt, still prevails.

To return to Cameroon, Douala was the territory of the German Protestant missionaries, Yaoundé was the seat of the Catholic bishop, repeating the German religious division of the Thirty Years [War, 1618–1648] without much point, because for various reasons people moved from one place to another. Yaoundé, where I had so many hot days and freezing nights, was still a place fit for human habitation, and at 850 metres above sea level, was a nice little town with European houses and even hotels, a railway station and a cathedral. The time I spent there in 1941 was made pleasant for me. The bishop (a missionary one) honoured me with his invitations, because I helped Abbé Neumann, or Newman, he may have used a *nom de guerre,* with the translation and composition of British and Gaullist propaganda brochures at the house of the Mission. Just as in the Alps, the Yaoundé mountains were very strenuous to climb, and few tourists cared to climb 2,500 or 3,000 metres to the summits in that tropical heat, especially as hyenas, jackals, panthers and lions could be met on the way. Nobody to my knowledge ever climbed Mt Cameroon, but around Yaoundé there were roads built up to 1,300 metres above sea level through the forests, and even a few villases were built as far as 1,000 metres up the mountain sides.

In 1943 I spent some weeks in the same camp at Brazzaville as Jules Supervielle's son-in-law Pierre David, who is often mentioned in Supervielle's edited correspondence. Pierre David [1911–1982] was a somewhat neurotic character, but a well-informed man of letters and a fine musician who played the cello in orchestras and wrote essays on music. He travelled in South Africa with an orchestra, and this is how he met the Supervielle family and married one of the daughters.[225] His taste was definitely aristocratic, his politics, insofar as he had any, attracted him to Maurras. That is to say he was not really a Gaullist, since at that moment Maurras supported Pétain. In fact, Pierre David was a very reluctant soldier, having German friends who were not Nazis to be sure, but intellectuals close to the Stefan George circle, with their queer ideas of Germanism. (So too was Count Stauffenberg, but that was a name we did not know yet in Brazzaville in the winter of 1942–1943.) He had been a prisoner of war in Germany from June 1940 to June 1941, in a camp near the Baltic coast. He escaped with other French prisoners of war across the frontier into Lithuania but they were re-arrested by the Russians. Then when the Nazis attacked Russia, the British Embassy obtained their release and their transfer to England in RAF planes. This is how he and other French prisoners of war reached the de Gaulle capital of Brazzaville, via Moscow and London. He had broken a leg in the course of all these adventures, while I was already declared unfit for further tropical service and was waiting for my evacuation from Africa, when we met in Brazzaville.

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[225] Jules Supervielle had only one daughter, Françoise.

We were both used for some time for auxiliary duties on account of our languages, I for liaison work with the American Mission commanded by the United States Colonel Cunningham, while Pierre David had to look after volunteers from South America, and also some Spanish refugees who had volunteered for the Foreign Legion (not very reputable elements for the most part). We disagreed over politics; he defended Maurras, whereas I could not approve the then attitude of the founder of the Action Française as well as other things in his past. He had a great admiration for Claudel which I could not share, and so on… But we were almost the only intellectuals in the Brazzaville transit camp and so we became friends. Like me, he knew the missionary priests of the Order of the Holy Ghost, and we both knew the nuns who had nursed us in the hospital. The priests and nuns had the habit of offering cold drinks after the Sunday Mass when we went to borrow books, the mission house and the convent being the only places in the capital which had a library. Pierre David also had some acquaintances amongst the 'civilian' intelligentsia of the colony and some of the ladies invited us to drinks or to dinner.

Early in 1943 I was sent to Pointe Noire, the port of the Congo colony, where I had to wait a further two and a half months to get a ship sailing to England and a visa from the British consul there, which would enable me to land in the United Kingdom or go ashore in British territory – i.e. Nigeria or Sierra Leone – if the boat docked for a few days. Before I left Brazzaville, Pierre David said a moving farewell to me, and I said: "Au revoir à Paris." I never saw him again, though after the war I heard news of him from Professor Denis Saurat and Pierre-Jean Jouve, the poet and writer on music, who gave some lectures at the London Allied Circle (the Club in Mayfair to which we belonged) about 1948–1949, and who told me that Pierre David had returned to his music and literature. As to his father-in-law, Jules Supervielle, he remained in South Africa, having spent most of his life there.

It was about two or three months after the American landings in North Africa that I left the Brazzaville transit camp. It was already clear that 'Vichy' had ceased to exist when the Germans occupied the Zone Libre, i.e. the southern half of France, and that the war would soon be over. In fact, in the de Gaulle Forces in Africa, we were somewhat surprised that it still dragged on in 1944. I remember a meeting of all the Europeans in Brazzaville in the garden of the Government Palace – October or early November 1942? – at which the General had announced that "l'action décisive s'approche [the decisive action is approaching]." If Pierre David ceased to plead for Vichy, in the sense that he believed that Pétain was playing for time, and that some good idea from Maurras had been incorporated into the Vichy Constitution, it is only fair to say that he was never hostile to de Gaulle and the early Gaullists, who were mostly military men of Catholic and conservative sympathies, neither did he have any sympathy for the Vichy traitors and collaborateurs.

There was a grain of truth in this pro-Vichy argument of many Frenchmen, that Pétain was playing for time. We, the firm pro-Ally Europeans of 1939–1940, had already had some difficulty by 1942–1943 in defending our old position. In the pre-war years, Britain and France delayed their counteraction for far too long and their weakness and delay gave added strength to Germany. Poland was not saved by her Allies in 1939, the phoney war in 1939–1940 was a bad disappointment for us, followed by a worse disillusionment in June 1940. We did not realise how weak the Western Allies were, or how far they lacked any worthwhile political doctrine and corresponding military strategy. They trusted America to come into the war. America did so in December 1941 under a direct threat to her Pacific coast from Japan. But the great blow to Germany was the defeat on the Volga at Stalingrad. America's war against Nazi Germany only began in earnest in November 1942 with the expedition to Algeria, but by then Russia could plausibly claim to be the victor in Europe. Meanwhile Britain suffered heavy losses in Greece and Singapore, redeemed by some successes in Egypt, in Libya and in Ethiopia, also at sea, but the whole British strategy looked as though it was a game to delay decision, until America came in with her full strength. Britain's European Allies at that time were some governments in exile of doubtful position (Poland, for example, where General Sikorski's position was challenged), General de Gaulle, King George II of the Hellenes, King Peter of Yugoslavia, who were nothing more than auxiliaries. All this did not look to most people like a justification of General de Gaulle's policy, as yet.

Some French people in Africa were sincerely devoted to de Gaulle and his idea of the liberation of France and were not upset by the confusing fluctuations of the war situation in the early years. Many more just rallied in 1940 because Vichy could not supply anything to the too distant colonies in French Equatorial Africa, so that the Congo, Chad, Cameroon and Gabon territories depended on their British Commonwealth neighbours (Gold Coast and Nigeria) for their daily food. Many of these colonial Frenchmen did not like us. Absurd rumours circulated that we were British agents, sent to take over their jobs in the administration and in the business life of the colony. As to the Americans, at least they spent many dollars in Brazzaville and Port Lamy etc., in the European shops. We were less good customers, being less well paid. The Europeans in Brazzaville were relieved when, after the landing in Algeria on 9th November 1942, we began to depart. Incidentally, many of the Europeans in French Equatorial Africa were not even Europeans. Many of them were Lebanese, Syrian, Greek, Egyptian, Indian, or else Algerian Jews who counted as French (whereas the Algerian Moslems were not technically French citizens because of their law of inheritance resulting from Moslem polygamy), or they were Portuguese tradesmen. Only the administration, the officers' corps of the local army units were French, as well as some highly skilled specialists such as doctors, railway engineers, chemists of the Pasteur Institute and so on.

In fact, the colour on the map of Africa of those days indicating British or French sovereignty over a colony did not matter very much. Trade and the exploitation of African sources were very largely done by non-colonial powers such as the Greeks, Egyptians, Swedes and others, including Indians who had the big general stores which sold clothes, food, household items, etc. In this way Africa was international. The Swiss financed the cocoa plantations for their chocolate industry, the Swedes used African woods for their furniture and matches; some trades were in the hands of Portuguese or Spaniards, even in territories which were officially British or French. Hotels and restaurants were mostly in the hands of Greeks, sometimes of Italians, the Indian bazaars provided us with absolutely everything that we needed and could afford to buy with our limited military pay (I cannot now remember exactly how much that was). Up to the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Japanese sold a lot of their textiles to the natives, but a better quality came from Singapore and India.

The Chad territory in 1941 and 1942 when I was there had a Moslem majority, but there was a Christian minority as well. In Accra on the Gold Coast, I also met the Moslem Haussas. Already before the outbreak of the war, being practically certain that it could be delayed but not prevented, except by an internal revolution in Germany, I became interested in Islam, since I was convinced that the Western Allies would need Arab sympathies, and that the Arabs and various Moslem nations ought to be on our side. I can’t claim that I made very rapid progress in my knowledge of the Arab language and oriental scholarship, but I did start to learn Arabic and I studied the Koran. In Africa I trained a small Moslem unit, men from Chad. One of my favourite authors of those days was Ernest Psichari, the grandson of Ernest Renan and friend of Jacques Maritain. Psichari explained in his book *Les Voix qui crient dans le Désert,*[226] which I was reading at the time (and which I probably bought in Brazzaville, unless I borrowed it from the library of the Holy Ghost Fathers) that to win the respect and sympathy of the Moslems, a European must first of all be a good Christian. That was also my experience with Moslem soldiers and Moslem people whom I met, and from whom I tried to study the ways of the Moslem world. Very few of them were educated men, but all of them appreciated my interest and that of other Europeans in their faith. Almost every evening in the squares of the city, they made their prayers, facing Mecca and repeating “Allah Akbar, God is greatest”. I carried on me a Koran in Arabic, with an English translation on the opposite page, and I understood by my contact with the Moslems that theirs was a religion which regulated their whole life, giving them a social discipline.

One Moslem I shall always remember was the shoemaker at Fort Archambault in Chad. Once I asked him whether he was paid in his capacity as adviser on Moslem law to the District Commissioner, and as the Moslem lawyer of the local population. I shall never forget his indignant reply: “God gave me knowledge of his word and I cannot sell God’s word, which it is my duty to spread. I am only bound to make shoes if people pay me for doing so, but I have the duty to give God’s law to people to whom less knowledge was granted than to me. If God gave me more shoes than he did to other people, I should give shoes to other people. But I must work to pay for my own shoes. Other people must pay for theirs” – thus showing that manual work is not incompatible with a spiritual vocation, except in the pre-Christian thought of the Greeks and the Romans. In contrast to the Arab shoemaker, the ‘boys’ who were our servants – i.e. adults but called boys according to colonial tradition in both English and French – and who were possibly Christians or possibly heathens, were more light-hearted and less scrupulous. For example, one of the boys who liked me very much once gave me a freshly laundered shirt. I wondered whether it was really mine because I thought my shirt had a slight darn in it, while this shirt was perfect. I could never find out to whom this perfect shirt belonged. Antoine, my boy, never told me how he had obtained it, or how the repair had disappeared so quickly. Another experience I shall never forget happened in Gabon. I gave my boy called Michel of the tribe of the Zanguis, my shopping list. He brought it back saying “Monsieur tu n’as pas mis allumettes, tu as besoin allumettes. [Sir, you did not list matches, you need matches.]” I was astonished, being convinced Michel could neither read nor write. How did he know my shopping list was incomplete? “Je sais lire et écrire, Monsieur. [Sir, I can read and write.]” “But why did you not tell me when I asked you?” “Je ne te connaissais pas, Monsieur. [I didn’t know you, Sir.]” – “Why should it be necessary to know me first, if you can read and write?” – Michel replied: “Quand je dis je sais lire et écrire, le Blanc dit: Nègre malin, mauvais boy. Si je dis je ne sais pas lire et écrire, le Blanc dit Nègre stupide, bon boy. Tu n’es pas comme les autres Blancs, je peux te dire je sais lire at écrire. [When I say I can read and write, the white man says cunning Negro, bad boy. When I say I cannot read and write, the white man says stupid Negro, good boy. You are different than other Whites, and I can tell you that I can read and write.]”

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[226] Published in Paris (Conard), 1920. Ernest Psichari (1883–1914) (with a Greek father), famous for his criticism of his grandfather’s views, converted to Catholicism only after a serious personal crisis. A professional soldier (artilleryman) previously in Africa, he fell in the Battle of Rossignol in 1914.

My job in Libreville in Gabon was to listen to the various radio stations, the BBC, Radio South Africa and others, including enemy broadcasts. I summed up the news twice a week, sometimes three times a week and Michel, my boy, distributed copies of my bulletin to the various Europeans, who gave him a tip. My bulletin was a success with the Governor of Gabon, Colonel André Parant, who, however, remarked one day that he did not object to pinning it up on a noticeboard outside the Palace, except that, as he said smilingly, he did not think that my obituary of Henri Bergson, the main subject of one of my bulletins, would be appreciated by the natives. Indeed, I don’t think that it was, but I am sorry that this masterpiece of mine explaining the philosophy of Bergson is lost for posterity. Some years later, with a slight Magyarising of the name Michel Zangui, spelt Zenghy, I wrote, half in joke, half seriously in 1954 the *Political Alphabet* in the Paris review of Sándor Rezek, *Ahogy Lehet.* Michel Zenghy was the author who knows more than he confesses.[227]

Just as music in the army signifies Reveille [wake up, rouse], or mealtimes, or changing the guard, or the Last Post, so in an African village the beating of the drum gives a signal, or a message, or a piece of information to a stranger arriving. Few Europeans know the tunes on these drums, but one means “Do not stop here, there is an epidemic”; another “Prepare for a long stay, the road further south is flooded by bad rains which may last another night”; or “We have a feast tomorrow, you are welcome”; or “Many birds are flying over this place. Shoot one and give us a good meal”. A later development of this technique gave us the morse code, not to mention signature tunes on television.

I was in various British and French hospitals being treated for my many attacks of malaria. In the French hospital at Libreville, or perhaps at Brazzaville, the nursing staff were nuns of the Order of the Holy Ghost, and they invariably put uppermost on my bedtable the Life of Blessed Joseph Libermann, the founder of their Order, originally the son of a Jewish in Alsace. I don’t know how often I read that Life of Joseph

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[227] See Chapter 11.

Liebermann, who may be a saint by now, but at that time the nuns requested us to pray for his full canonisation, which could not come about without further miracles. I hope with all my heart that they have occurred in the last forty years or so, and that Joseph Liebermann is now a saint.[228]

Once when I was in hospital at Pointe Noire with malaria and had a high fever, a good African soldier on guard duty managed to get me asleep, and my very high temperature fell while I was asleep. What he gave me to drink, I cannot recall, but it was a native brew, not a European one, I am quite sure. Africans have a considerable practical medical knowledge, but they never give away their secrets. By contrast to these good healing powers, there is the sinister influence of the witchdoctors although Europeans are never attacked by the illnesses which witchdoctors can impose on their terrified victims. A British doctor, a specialist in tropical diseases, told us in a lecture at Accra that one day an African asked for admission to his hospital. He was asked what was wrong with him. He said: “I am going to die.” The doctor examined the man and could not find anything physically wrong with him, but kept him in hospital, where indeed he died a fortnight later.

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[228] Francis and not Joseph Libermann, who was proclaimed ‘venerable’ by Pope Leo IX (1876) but is still not beatified, let alone canonised.

Chapter 23

La France Libre Becomes La France Combattante

I arrived in England in April 1943 and reported to the Free French military GHQ at Pimlico in Central London. I had to undergo a new medical examination, the result of which was that I had to go to the French Hospital at Brighton on the Sussex coast. I needed a rest and for the time being I was unfit for any sort of active service, so that my stay in the hospital was extended to four weeks. From Brighton I came back to London. The Free French Forces were by now much better organised than they were at the time I had left England. We received proper military identity papers, and we had to submit to an interrogation concerning our past and our qualifications, etc. before these papers were issued to us. In 1940 there had not been time to issue us with any papers. The interrogations took place at a branch of the army service called the BCRA, the Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action. I was told at the end of my interrogation that they would send for me sooner or later, but that meanwhile I was to wait until the authorities decided what to do with me. I began to grow impatient, and I told Maurice Schumann that I had volunteered after all to do something, and not just to be idle under hospital treatment, which consisted of taking pills given by the doctors and nuns who nursed me. Maurice Schumann introduced me to Jacques Soustelle, who was the head of the Free French Information Service and to Maurice Dejean, the former Councillor to the French Embassy in Berlin, who at this moment in 1943 was Head of the French Mission accredited to the exile governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc. I also renewed all my contacts with my Polish friends, and with *Free Europe* in which I appeared again as a commentator on international affairs, mainly on Central and Eastern Europe.

To cut a long story short, I was finally accepted at the BCRA, after writing several papers which were a sort of Concours, or examination on current affairs. I don't remember now all the subjects on which I wrote, but the subject of the main paper on which I had to elaborate was the territorial changes in Europe since 1919 and the claims for territorial readjustments and revision of the Treaties of 1919–1920. My paper was seen by Jacques Soustelle, Maurice Dejean and Colonel André de Vavrin, who was known as Col. Passy. My paper was a great success, the others also, and I was told that until further orders I was to work at 10 Duke Street (near Manchester Square and the Wallace Collection) as one of the assistants of Col. Passy at the BCRA. I expected to be given commissioned rank in the army. This in fact came later, but I received immediately the civil service rank of *rédacteur de première classe,* with the corresponding salary and entertainment allowance in connection with all the people I had to see, in order to gather information. Meanwhile, I was allowed to go about in civilian clothes when I wished, until I was given commissioned rank and wore the emblem of the Intelligence Service on my uniform, which was a sphynx. The BCRA was later known as the DGER, Direction Générale des Études et des Recherches, i.e. it was the same thing as the Foreign Office Research Department at Chatham House.

I was also given special leave to follow the course of Slavonic and East European Studies at Oxford, which trained a certain number of British officers destined to do liaison work with East European countries. I took part in that course, both as a student and a lecturer, and spent about three weeks in Oxford. Finally, I came back to London to work under Col. Passy and the civilian head of our department, Jacques Soustelle. My task was to collect information from non-official sources, to read the enemy press in German and Italian, and to make a commentary on the evolving situation in Central and Eastern Europe. We received the German newspapers via Sweden, but we had many difficulties in getting the Italian press, *L'Osservatore Romano* was particularly difficult to get in those days. So long as Rome was surrounded, the Germans did not let it through. *L'Osservatore Romano* was printed inside Vatican City and the Germans respected the territorial sovereignty of the Pope, but did not allow Vatican publications to go abroad, so we could not get it in London. One of my colleagues made a daily bulletin on the English press, another one, a former French Consul in the Far East, covered Japan and the Far East. I had to go to a lot of lectures relating to my various subjects, at least one day every week I spent at Chatham House reading the enemy press and making extracts from it. My reports had to be hand-written; if a typed copy was necessary, it had to be done on the orders of the head of my section, Captain André Nocque, to be sure that no information was leaked at any time, and all my reports were marked 'Secret'. At the same time, I had to read books and make extracts from them, insofar as they were relevant to my subjects. In other words, I was very busy. I had a lot of appointments with my opposite numbers in the British and American services, also business lunches and dinners on my expense account.

One of these opposite numbers was my old friend Hugh Seton-Watson [1916–1984], whom I met frequently in those days, the son of Robert William Seton-Watson, the well-known Oxford don who specialised in Central European affairs. Hugh Seton-Watson worked at the beginning of the war at the British Embassy in Belgrade and also at the Embassy in Bucharest, and later on, with the rank of Captain, he was appointed to the British Intelligence Service in Cairo. Another frequent contact for me was Jan Masaryk, whom I used to know at Wickham Steed's Saturdays at Holland Park before the war, also Professor Angelo Crespi and Sandro Magri, who lectured in Italian literature at Cambridge; anti-Fascist intellectuals of long standing, with whom my contacts were now very useful. Paulo and Fiero Treves, sons of the late Socialist leader Claudio Treves whom I used to know well, also gave me useful information.

In September 1943, on one of my visits to Maurice Dejean, he asked me whether I knew Robert Luc, with whom he wished to put me in contact. The name did not mean anything to me, but at the first personal meeting I had with Robert Luc at Carlton Gardens I learned many things which were hitherto unknown to me. Robert Luc had been Second Secretary at the French Embassy in Athens at the moment of the French collapse in 1940. His wife, née Jane Holt, was the daughter of a British admiral and he himself was pro-British in his sympathies from the very beginning. This was the reason why the Vichy Foreign Office transferred him from Athens to Budapest, when the Italians attacked Greece in 1940. Robert Luc and his wife spent three years in Budapest; there must be a considerable number of people still alive in Budapest who knew them there at that time. Robert Luc gave me an exposé of the situation in Hungary, such as he knew it at our first meeting. He told me that Nicholas Kállay, Prime Minister since 1942, was working for a separate peace. He even publicly declared that the tripartite treaty which bound Hungary to Germany and Italy was no longer valid since the fall of Mussolini in June 1943, which was soon followed, in September 1943, by the co-belligerence of the Italian army on the Allied side. Robert Luc left Hungary in that moment for Algeria via Turkey, which was still neutral, and from Algeria he arrived in London, where Jane gave birth to their first daughter, Valérie. The reason why they left Budapest was that they did not want to be under German control in the event of a Nazi occupation of Budapest, which actually came in March 1944, but which some people had thought possible a year before. Robert Luc gave his information on Hungary both to me and his own authority, the Free French Foreign Office (i.e. to Maurice Dejean) and also to the British Foreign Office Research Department at Chatham House, where Carlile A. Macartney was dealing with Hungarian affairs.

Robert Luc and I agreed that we should meet frequently and inform all our authorities more or less in the same sense and try our best to get Hungary out of the war. In fact, as I heard from him, a great number of British, French and other prisoners of war had escaped from Germany to Hungary, and Hungary kept them in a special camp, counting on being able to use them in the event of Hungary becoming a co-belligerent on the Allied side, following the Italian example. These were details which I learned for the first time, although the general line of Kállay's policy was known to every serious observer. Robert Luc told me also that the Polish refugees not only could live in Hungary, but had a Polish school for the children, that none of the British, French, Polish or other escaped prisoners of war had been handed over to the Germans, while the new Italian co-belligerent Government had sent an ambassador to Budapest, who had been received with full honours. Later I met Nicholas Kállay in Florence, in 1949. I discussed the whole situation of the past with him and he confirmed every detail of Robert Luc's information.

As it may be remembered, there was an Allied declaration on the restoration of Austrian independence in 1943. In several of my memoranda at that time I came back to a principle which I laid down and elaborated: the independence of Austria is only possible if Hungary is free, therefore if the Allies do not want to leave Austria in German hands, they must help Hungary to become truly independent. I don't know how far my various reports, minutes and memoranda were kept in the French archives (at the Archives Nationales in Paris) and whether any Hungarian historian has ever found and used them. Of course, concerning the independence of Austria, France had the right to express an opinion, because the German annexation of Austria obviously strengthened the Nazi power. In my conversations with Jan Masaryk, who was no longer the minister plenipotentiary accredited to Britain, but the foreign minister of the Czech government-in-exile, I discussed the situation, and I tried to win him over to the idea that if Berlin and Vienna had an inter-Allied Four Power Occupation, which was already being planned in 1943–1944, a similar régime for Budapest and Prague should also be planned. Jan Masaryk was personally favourable to this idea, but Beneš was not, he claimed and believed that Czechoslovakia needed a close friendship with the Soviet Union. This struggle for Hungary was the last political excitement of my war years.

My reports were usually read by General de Gaulle himself and General Koenig, who commanded the French Forces of the Interior – in other words the Resistance in France, which was directed from Duke Street and one other London centre nearby – and General Béthouard, who was already designated to be the military commander of the French Forces occupying Austria and some of the French Zones in occupied Germany. Col. Passy also read my papers. He left politics soon after the conclusion of the war. My German bulletin went to Maurice Dejean and Col. Passy's copy was regularly sent to Jacques Soustelle, as he became the civilian head detailed to our Press Department from 1944 onwards.

As Hungarians know to their cost, the Nazis occupied Budapest, deposed the Kállay Government which took refuge in the Turkish Embassy, and a new government was imposed on the country by the Nazi occupation forces. Thus, it became obvious that Hungary was not on the German side and further, that conservative and even reactionary Hungarians were trying to get Hungary out of the war and out of any obligation to Nazi Germany. Subsequently Romania ceased to collaborate with the Germans, and so did Bulgaria. The whole system of Nazi Germany's alliances collapsed, and by the end of the year 1944 it was evident that the German capitulation was only a matter of time. During the whole of this period, I went on reading the enemy press and continued to make extracts for the general staff to read. My work for the Free French ended in May 1946, when the Duke Street office was closed down and I was demobilised.

Before I come to a discussion of General de Gaulle himself, I will give a historical summary, for the purposes of documentation, of the chief personalities involved in the General's movement to liberate France and continue the fight on the Allied side. His only companions who really counted were General Leclerc, Admiral d'Argenlieu, Generals Legentilhomme, Catroux and de Larminat, Colonel Parent, Governor-General Félix Eboué, General Koenig and Colonel Passy. The political set – André Philip, René Meyer, Pierre Bloch, Jules Moch, René Cassin, Georges Bidault – belonged to a much later phase of La France Combattante.

General Leclerc, i.e. Jacques-Philippe, Comte de Hautecloque as I have said, commanded the French troops which entered Paris in triumph in August 1944. He liberated Alsace by the end of 1944 and arrived with his French troops in Bavaria in the last phase of the war. He joined the de Gaulle forces at the very beginning in 1940 and was the most active and the most generally respected of the Free French military leaders after de Gaulle himself. Thierry d'Argenlieu had been a naval officer in the First World War; after the death of his wife, he became a Carmelite monk, but during the Second World War served once more in the French Navy. He was on the *Westernland* with de Gaulle, as I have related. After his time in Africa, he went on a diplomatic mission to French Canada, to the best of my knowledge. After victory, he returned to his convent.[229] General Legentilhomme was at the time of General de Gaulle's appeal of 18th June 1940 in command of the French forces at Djibouti in Somalia. He was senior in rank to de Gaulle but did not want the leadership (de Gaulle said in 1940 that he was prepared to put himself at the disposal of any officer senior to him who would lead French military resistance to Nazi Germany). He took part in the organisation of the Free French Forces, holding a position similar to that of a Minister of War, France at that time not yet having any internationally recognised Government.

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[229] In fact, some years later.

General Catroux and his troops fought Vichy in Syria and was also senior to de Gaulle, who was a two-star Général de Brigade in 1940 and could not give himself promotion, even when he became Head of the French Provisional Government in 1944. Colonel, later General de Larminat was in Egypt in 1940 and organised the Free French Forces in the Middle East. Colonel Parent was the Governor of Gabon. Not a professional soldier, he was an officer of the Reserve following the First World War and volunteered for the Second World War. Félix Eboué, a black native of Martinique in the French West Indies, like his wife, was an official in the French colonial administration, and it was principally to him that de Gaulle owed the rallying of French Equatorial Africa to the Free French cause. He was the Governor of Chad in 1940 and General de Gaulle made him the Governor General of the whole of Equatorial Africa. Unfortunately, he died before the end of the war. General Koenig was of Alsatian origin. He served in Egypt and commanded the French forces at Bir Hakeim in 1942, famous at the time as a Free French victory in Egypt over the troops of Rommel in the desert. 'Passy', Col. André de Vavrin, was trained at the École Polytechnique and was a captain at the beginning of the war, and with that rank he fought in Norway in 1940. He came over to England from Norway with some of the French troops and de Gaulle made him the head of the Deuxième Bureau of the General Staff and in 1943 or 1944 made him Colonel. He retired from public life at the end of the war.

General de Lattre de Tassigny rallied with his groups to General Giraud in Algeria in 1942, and that was also the position of General Juin (General Giraud was the American nominee for Commander-in-Chief). It was Generals de Lattre de Tassigny and Juin who organised the French troops for a new campaign in North Africa, without repudiating the Armistice of 1940. Leclerc and de Lattre de Tassigny met at Strasbourg at the end of 1944, Leclerc coming with his army from Paris and de Lattre de Tassigny from Corsica and Marseille with his North African troops. General Juin landed in Italy and took part in the Sicily–Naples–Rome campaign within the Allied command. By 1942, it was not so necessary, after the American landing in North Africa, to rally to de Gaulle and his Free French Forces as to rally to the Allied command.

As to the politicians who were associated with de Gaulle in the second half of the war, André Philip came from an old Huguenot family. He was professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Lyon and rallied to the Free French in England, where he brought a message of support from the former Prime Minister Edouard Herriot. He was the first politician of any note to join the movement in 1941. René Meyer was a left-wing politician, a Radical Socialist. Pierre Bloch I knew personally. He was a social democrat, of the party of Léon Blum. René Cassin was a professor of law and had the reputation of being one of his country's leading freemasons. How far this was true, I cannot say. Georges

Bideault was a Christian Democrat, a professor agrégé, a historian and a journalist on the staff of *L'Aube,* the progressive Catholic newspaper and the organ of the Catholic left wing. I knew him slightly before the war at the Foyer de la Paix of Marc Sagnier and would have forgotten him, but to my astonishment he emerged in 1944 as a leading personality of the Resistance and was later to become prime minister of France.

As a footnote, it is interesting that in 1944 I was asked to be the interpreter for Vilmos Böhm, who arrived from Stockholm and wanted to meet in London the French Socialist leaders Pierre Bloch, Georges Boris, etc. My interpreting was not necessary, by the way, as they spoke fluent German and that language was of course very familiar to Vilmos Böhm, who gave us a lot of information concerning Hungary and Austria.

To come now to General de Gaulle himself. Looking back nearly forty years after the events described took place, I find that my attitude towards the de Gaulle of the war years has not changed. My historical judgement on his further career in French history can be given objectively because I was not intimately concerned in it.

Apart from the three weeks on the *Westernland* I saw de Gaulle in Brazzaville and in London some twelve or fifteen times at close quarters and when he paid a State Visit to London as President of France in 1960, we were given tickets for one of the ceremonies. He was always friendly to everyone he spoke to, but most often his face was serious and composed. I never had the impression that he was seeking popularity by adopting any so-called informal pose. Unless he was taking inspections at parades, he always smoked heavy French tobacco – Belgian cigarettes from the Congo, I think, because the Celtique and Gauloise brands were almost impossible to get during the war. Once I saw him laugh, but very discreetly, when we were performing various sporting competitions on board the *Westernland,* as well as the usual comic repertory of the barracks (running with a spoon in one's mouth, the egg and spoon race, a boxing match between the giant and the pygmy in each Company, etc.). When we had a few singsongs on board he looked as though he approved such methods of keeping up morale, but he seldom spoke to anyone on these occasions and just showed his satisfaction with a gesture of the hand.

I remember him at Mass. This was said in an empty room on the ship in which there were no chairs; he was offered a chair brought to him from an officer's cabin, but he did not use it. At the moment of the Elevation, we all stood to attention and these men on armed guard duty presented arms. On all these occasions I remember the very concentrated expression on his face, and he was always grave and military in his bearing, but never stiff. With the special talent of Generals, he retained hundreds of names, and he always addressed the officers and long-serving sergeants by name. Once, towards the end of my last stay in Brazzaville before the Americans landed in North Africa, I was present at a reception given in the General's honour by the Governor-General Félix Éboué at the Palace. De Gaulle went round and asked everybody what his occupation was. I told him that I was a temporary interpreter to the visiting American Mission on the opposite bank of the Congo, and that in this capacity I went over to Léopoldville (the capital of the Belgian Congo) frequently, and also saw them at the American Club in Brazzaville which had been organised 'for the lads'. He waited to be sure that the Americans felt happy at Brazzaville, and I was able to tell him that they were.

In his book *La Discorde chez l'Ennemi,* published in 1924 by Plon, a major study on military history which analyses the very different views of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Ludendorff, Head of the General Staff and the Austrian allies of Germany in the First World War on the conduct of the war and the possibilities of peace, de Gaulle gives almost a full chapter to the silence a true leader must keep. Originally, he had no desire to hold power after victory, but he waited in silence, ready to be called when the situation of his country required a leader. Thus, he resigned from his position as President of the Provisional Government in May 1946 and waited in silence until his country called him back in May 1958, at the time of the Algerian crisis, with the threat of civil war spreading to the mainland. During these years, he published three out of his series of four books of Mémoires de Guerre: *L'Appel, L'Unité* and *Le Salut.* A Gaullist movement was started by Jacques Soustelle and Georges Bidault without de Gaulle's approval and against his wishes. But when some of the generals in Algeria – [Raoul A. L.] Salan [1899–1984] and [Edmond] Jouhaud [1905–1995][230] in particular – joined the movement, it gathered momentum and eventually brought him back to power, because the President, René Coty, said that either the General must take over the government, or he would resign.

This exciting phase in French politics was no longer any concern of mine, especially since I became a British subject in 1955. Despite what has been said or written about me by association of ideas, I was a 'Gaullist' only during the war years and until the Direction Générale des Études et des Recherches was closed down in the summer of 1946, when I left the French Army. Thus, I could not be involved in any way with the Gaullism of 1958 and subsequent years.

The Spanish monthly review *Nuestro Tiempo* published in May 1963 an essay of mine written the previous year on the Algerian situation, following the seven years of latent civil war, which shows that I was by no means uncritical of de Gaulle in the post-war years. I commented in my Journal on that particular day: "Many things have come to pass which I can hardly understand. I think the loss of Algeria is a very sad thing, but it is difficult to see how Algeria could be an exception to the general withdrawal of the European powers from Africa. I do not find the de Gaulle régime attractive, nor do I see Pompidou and company as noble or fine figures. But without a general return of Europe to a system of national powers and of balance – very unlikely – I do not see any practical suggestion for an alternative to the de Gaulle – Adenauer, i.e. a Franco–German axis." On 16th March, when the ceasefire in Algeria was announced, I commented on it in my analysis for the Munich press agency *Deutsche-Wirtschaftdienst* and along the same lines in my Journal: "That this order to evacuate a territory had to be given by General de Gaulle of all people, is a particularly cruel irony of History, that goddess of irony! We listened to de Gaulle on the radio; still his old voice, but what a melancholy thought to recall his great days, when his message was so different! What a tragic fate that now his main support comes from the Vichyists of former times, while Bidault, Soustelle and so many old and firm Gaullists of olden times are in opposition, and that rebel generals appear in a queer sort of Court, set up by a former rebel General. Yet, with all this, I am sure that there was never a more human and tolerant dictator than de Gaulle, and none had a greater understanding for the nobler and better motives of his opponents, though certainly not all of them are men inspired by nobler motives… It is painful to read Pierre Boutang each week in *La Nation Française.* I am sure that he suffers a great deal in this crisis; siding with de Gaulle now, you look as though you are siding with the worst sort of ex-Vichyist, who advocated peace at any price in 1940–1942; siding with his opponents, you look as if you approve plastic bombs and murder."

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[230] Both were participants in the attempted coup in 1961, in the OAS, captured and sentenced to death but later pardoned.

The following month, when the rebel General [Raoul A. L.] Salan [1899–1984] was arrested, I wrote: "Pourvu que mort, il ne devient pas plus grand! [Provided he is dead, grander will he not become!], this new Duc de Guise. It is certainly no pleasure to read the police story of how a seven-star general was betrayed by a bribed accomplice. And it little warms my old Gaullist heart to know that de Gaulle is at the head of a régime employing police spies, double agents, debased, cynical and contemptible methods. That Salan was a conspirator I know and that a Fronde has to be put down, with all its Condés and its Cardinal de Retz – who can deny it? Henry IV broke the Ligue, Mazarin smashed the Fronde – yet it was this sort of victory which more than anything else prepared the fall of the Bourbons."

When I heard the news of de Gaulle's sudden death in November 1970, I wrote in my Journal (No. XLI): "A giant he was, to be sure, even physically. Sometimes Nature itself designates the men who are destined, in the Infantry Regulations of the French army, to be 'homme de base' and to whom the other men are supposed to rally when the command: Alignez-vous! [Fall in!] is given. De Gaulle was homme de base, with his 185 centimetres of height as a Cadet at St Cyr – and he remained homme de base morally and physically throughout a whole stormy period of French and European history.

The one true hero of this age was perhaps de Gaulle, whose actions were a response to a challenge, to situations not of his own making, whose great virtue was a courage provoked by events, and not exhibited for its own sake and whose political action meant a restoration of old established laws, of the essential rights of man, not the imposition of artificial ideals and utopias. To me Charles de Gaulle was the statesman with a vision, with imagination, and with immense surprises throughout the whole of his career. Nobody in this century was more of a strong man than he was; nobody avoided as much as he did the usual means of alleged strong men to impose themselves on the nation. Nobody was less of a dictator in the twentieth century sense. Nobody put an end to threatening anarchy in as mild a way as he did in Paris in May 1968, nobody retired with greater dignity as soon as he was reasonably sure that the institutions created by him would last.

When all the controversies concerning de Gaulle are forgotten – the reprisals of 1944–1945 (against Brinon, Luchaire, Brasillach, Laval, Pétain), Algeria, the regrettable exaggeration of the Vive le Québec Libre incident of 1967 – his greatness, his courage, his sense of national honour, his serenity, will appear clearly to everyone who still has 'une certaine idée', as he said himself, on France, on Europe and on mankind, who still believes that God created Man in his own image and redeemed his imperfections and sins by suffering, for ever:

> Heureux les grands vainqueurs. Paix aux hommes de guerre…
> Que Dieu mette avec eux, dans le juste plateau
> Ce qu'ils ont tant aimé, quelques grammes de terre,
> Un peu de cette vigne, un peu de ce coteau,
> Un peu de ce ravin sauvage et solitaire.[231]

There are lines in the poetry of Charles Péguy, written many years before the first appearance of Charles de Gaulle in History, which sum him up so much better than any official obituary could do.

On the day of his funeral, I did not call at the French Embassy in London to sign the book of condolences so many thousands of people did, but I wrote a short tribute in *The Tablet* and also for *Die Furche* of Vienna. I did not sign my name to the *Tablet* article, I signed it 'Volunteer No. 231.' I quoted a verse from Péguy's *Présentation de Paris à Notre Dame,* which I had once put as a motto to my review of the German press in August 1944, after the liberation of Paris:

> Voici notre appareil et voici notre chef,
> C'est un gars de chez nous qui siffle par moments.
> Il n'a pas son pareil pour les gouvernements.
> Il a la tête dure et le geste un peu bref.[232]

My head of section, Captain André Nocque, told me that de Gaulle smiled and that for the first and last time he made a comment on the margin of my page: it was "Merci".

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[231] Menczer quotes from the poem *Eve* (1913). No proper English rendition could be traced.
[232] No proper rendition could be traced.

Postscript

In September 1945 I went to Paris en mission connected with my Duke Street work. I had asked to be sent because I wanted to have first-hand knowledge of the situation in France after the Allied victory. I was interested to find out what the new post-occupation and post-war generation was thinking concerning future developments. I also wanted to renew old contacts, as far as I found this to be possible after five years of war and five years spent in England from 1934 to 1939. I had of course met French people regularly in England and always read French books and reviews, but now in 1945 I wanted to see what France looked like.

I lived in a requisitioned hotel in Levallois-Perret, a suburb of Paris, central Paris being as yet totally unorganised so soon after the cessation of hostilities. Cafés and restaurants were open, but there was a shortage of food and of everything else. My military ration cards meant that I could buy what food there was, but there were two meatless days a week and vegetables and eggs were the main diet. Cinemas and theatres were open, but the programmes were somewhat monotonous because technical difficulties of all kinds could only be overcome gradually. The Free French uniform was popular in the streets, as were also any Allied uniforms. There was no war damage to be seen because General Leclerc and his troops entered Paris without a battle being fought, although it had originally been the Allied strategy to by-pass Paris and move towards the Rhine. The police and the Garde Républicaine had occupied all the public buildings in time, so that the retreating German troops could not destroy anything.

I met French people of all political parties, all of them naturally pro-de Gaulle at that moment. The former Vichy factions claimed – sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly – that they had not served Vichy, but had really been playing for time. In some cases this was indeed true, the real traitors and collaborators were very few in number.

I spent ten days or a fortnight in Paris, then I returned to London and continued my work at Duke St., the immediate problem of the Intelligence services after the cessation of hostilities being the organisation of the French Occupation Zone in Germany and Austria. I asked to be sent to the French Zone in Austria (Tyrol and Vorarlberg) because the French Zone in Germany (Württemberg and Baden) were at that time unknown to me, while in Vienna there was a Four Power administration, American, British, French and Russian. I was not, however, allowed to go, because all our services were to be liquidated in the shortest possible time, the majority of the Free French wanting to go back to civilian life, their profession and their home. Gradually French life returned to normal, newspapers re-appeared with the removal of the Nazi censorship and the Radiodiffusion Française functioned immediately with the Liberation.

My London office closed down in the early summer of 1946. I was given the demobilisation gratuity and sixty clothing coupons to enable me to resettle into civilian life. So I settled in England, I married Marjorie in 1947 and had a home after so many years of wandering. Hungarian, Central and East European problems never left my mind, but I had no desire to enter British or French internal politics.

Béla Menczer (1902–1983) was a journalist and historian. As a youth, he was radical, but never a Communist. For illegal activities, he was sentenced to jail in 1922. After his release, he left Hungary and went to Paris where he joined the Károlyi emigration, serving as a liaison secretary to the former Prime Minister. Disillusioned and increasingly critical of both bourgeois radicalism and nationalism, he turned to conservatism. He lived then in Berlin and later in London. After the defeat of France, he enlisted in de Gaulle's army. He saw some action in Africa and was baptised a Catholic in Sierra Leone. After the war, he settled in London and published essays and papers on Hungarian and European history and literature. He was a polyglot, an amiable personality, with an unusually wide network of acquaintances, to which this autobiography, ending in 1946, testifies. Though staunchly anti-communist, he visited Hungary three times, and entrusted his legacy to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

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